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Exegesis & Poetic Rendering



Dr SS Bhatti



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JAPUJI

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By

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## PREFACE

I did my second PhD on “*Creative Mysticism: A Study of Nanak Bani with Special Reference to Japuji*” from Panjab University (PU). This was honoured by Guru Har Krishan Educational Society as the best doctorate done in 2000 at the Department of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies, PU. My involvement in this research provided me new insights into Guru Nanak Bani that I had been hearing from my grandfather and father since early childhood.

My training as a professional architect helped me view the Holy Word whose single utterance, according to Guru Nanak, brought the universe into existence by the incredible power of the Spirit, God. Studying Gurbani in relation to the major World Religions led me on to distinguish Guru Nanak as a prophet class apart. To put my discovery above the hackneyed use of “religion” in so-called spiritual discourses, I needed a different phrase to draw my readers’ attention away from the revulsion that the very mention of the word ‘religion’ causes—notwithstanding the fact that as far as I understand it, Religion is, in letter and spirit, pregnant with healthy meaning and is of far-reaching scope insofar as successfully guiding human life on the Path of Righteousness in this world is concerned.

The Scientists may poke fun at the theists but the fact remains that their own lifestyles are inextricably interwoven with what is essentially religious such as their names, surnames, and castes. Oddly enough, the Scientists believe in, and have no compunction of conscience in admitting, that Nature has the formidable power of creation, destruction, and preservation. This belief is odd in that, without their knowing, they subscribing to the be-all and end-all power of Nature without knowing that Guru Nanak has called Nature as the ‘manifest might’ of God: *Balihari qudrat wasia tera ant(u) na jaayi lakbia ...* (I’m a sacrifice unto Thee who are the indwelling Spirit of Nature!) ‘*Qudrat*’ is an Arabic word which means “The Power of God, the Most High”.

At any rate, I have always interpreted “Religion” to mean “joining again with ‘Logos’”. *Logos* (in Greek philosophy) is the rational principle that governs and develops the universe; (in Christian theology) it is the divine word or reason incarnate in Jesus Christ. However, since few are inclined by nature and passion to explore the deeper aspects of familiar connotations I thought it fit to coin a new phrase: *Creative Mysticism*. In the Stoic philosophy, *Logos* is the active principle living in and determining the world. In Christian theology, *Logos* is the word of God incarnate. *Logos* is opposed to *Mythos* which, in Greek, means talk, story, and myth: a story with a veiled meaning. Nobel Laureate TS Eliot has called Mythology the purest creation of the human imagination.

Having been involved with Creativity all my life as a student and teacher I discovered that creativity as practised by the peoples of the world is the only authentic evidence that God exists because He, as the Primal Creator, transmits Creativity to Man when He makes him in His own image. I am conscious in the use of the word ‘Man’ which, the Americans in their tame surrender to the misplaced demands of the Women’s Libbers, have reduced it to mean “an adult male person, as distinguished from a boy or a woman”. Unless otherwise specified, therefore, I always use the word ‘Man’ to mean “a member of the species *Homo sapiens* or all members of this species collectively, without regard to sex”. In this light, it may be conceded that the phrase “Man made in the image of God” represents, at least for me, each individual human person worldwide.

*Mysticism* has been called the “religion of the élite”. If this be accepted to be true, an overwhelming majority of peoples inhabiting the globe would be out of bounds for savouring the uplifting and deeply internalised delight of *Mysticism*. Since everyone isn’t a mystic, it stands to reason that the one who is must have the wherewithal to communicate what it is like to taste the flavour of *Mysticism*. Unfortunately, mystics of all genres throughout the world have conclusively stated, if in utter helplessness, that *Mysticism* is altogether incommunicable because it’s like a dumb guy eating sweet but unable to tell others how it tastes. The unique ability to tell others the taste of *Mysticism* comes from well-developed Creativity. It is this faith by which I was prompted to coin the phrase “Creative *Mysticism*” for Guru Nanak’s New Religion. In simpler terms, *Mysticism*, in the stated phrase, is Experience; and Creativity is its Expression. Guru Nanak is a prophet class apart because he brought ‘religion’ on a platter to the doorstep of the masses—illiterate, uninitiated, and without patronage of the clergy.

My interest in Gurbani was inherited from my father, late Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti (1905-1993 CE), who lovingly nurtured it until he breathed his last—by a constant hammering-in of the inalienable validity and veracity of the Divine Law by apt quotes from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (referred subsequently as SGGS). However, my real initiation into the Faith came after the death of my mother when I was barely 10 years of age. My farsighted father prepared me mentally and emotionally for the great saga of life that awaited us with all its tears and tortures whereby I would be smelted into a person of a quite different mettle over the coming years.

At his persuasion, I learnt by heart the Ninth Master Guru Tegh Bahadar's magnificent hymn [*Pritam jan(i) leh(u) man mahi ...* Sorath Mahalla 9, SGGS, p. 634] which has few parallels that portray the human predicament in such poignant language with a haunting purposiveness. Indeed, my father used to stress *ad infinitum* the plain truth that the Ninth Guru's Gurbani is full of *Vairag* [an unbroken spell of renunciatory longing] that impels the human soul into the sole quest of the Ultimate, Unchanging, Reality we call God. I remember reciting this soulful *shabda* umpteen times until the message pierced my sensibility, and I emerged as a believer of sorts—outside the ritualistic and ceremonious vestiges of Religion—from the quagmire of life's many vicissitudes.

By virtue of the initiation, which I received from my father in my younger days, my faith in Guru Nanak's Bani has grown from strength to strength. This has further been reinforced by my study of comparative religion over the past forty years. Since I have been engaged in creative work as a professional trained in Architecture, I have had occasion to relate my knowledge and experience to the intrinsic creativity of Gurbani, in general, and Guru Nanak's Bani, in particular. My research is thus the outcome of an assiduous application of the tools and methods of Architecture I have developed as a teacher, theorist, researcher, and practitioner to the exegesis of Gurbani.

Added to my architectural tool-kit is the material I have drawn from various other disciplines such as poetry, painting, sculpture, photography, philosophy, music ... in which I have firsthand experience, too. So equipped, I have faced the human predicament as an Act of Creation which has activated my psychosomatic energy into such thoughts, words, and deeds as may contribute, in however small a measure, *actually* to the amelioration of the human condition. How? By a resounding appeal to the validity and veracity of the inner life as enjoined upon the Sikh by Guru Nanak's

Bani, especially his Japuji—when he is confronted with its life-sustaining Spiritual Architecture, as I have endeavoured to reveal through this work.

According to my knowledge and experience, Architecture is the most comprehensive activity so far devised, encompassing as it does all the four major fields of human endeavour : the Humanities, Art, Science, and Technology. When in use, Architecture is the most prized of human civilisation's cultural possessions. When in ruins, Architecture is Archaeology: the tell-tale narrative of civilisations long past—even forgotten. As is now common knowledge, the Humanities covers history, sociology, economics, political science, etc., Art deals with performing (dance, drama, music, etc.), literary (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, etc.) and visual (architecture, painting, sculpture, etc.) arts; Science encompasses physics, chemistry, botany, natural and biological sciences; and Technology (including engineering, hi-tech products and processes) treats everything in physical terms that has made modern life what it is.

Perhaps "Holism", a term coined by General Smuts, who was a contemporary of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, alone conveys the many-splendoured beauty and bounty of Architecture. Holism is the theory that the fundamental principle of the universe is the creation of wholes i.e., complete and self-contained systems from the atom and cell by evolution to the most complex forms of life and mind.

The four elements, or building-blocks, of Architecture: Space, Structure, Form, and Time, are so universal that their use in the vocabulary of other disciplines as noted above becomes indispensable. That's why Architecture can never go out of fashion. We are now talking of Architecture of computers: the incredible gadgets that have increased the speed of material progress a million-fold! And, metaphorically, we always talk of Architect of the nation, Architect of one's destiny, etc.

My professional involvement in Creativity does not permit me to believe in *Specialisation*, as a choice calling. My credo is Comprehensivity *not* Specialisation which, with its characteristic emphasis on knowing more and more about less and less, ends up by distorting, in my view, the personality and perception of the specialist. *Comprehensivity*, much to the contrary, I believe, encourages knowing more and more about more and more, thereby broadening the outlook of the generalist, and results in the enrichment of his life transmitting *joie d' vivre* to everyone around.

Comprehensivity, in other words, is a wholesome recovery of the Renaissance Man (i.e., universal talent) from the archaeological ruins of a lifestyle that once nurtured itself on the inexhaustible creative, adaptive, and reflective powers of the human genius. It was that amazing creative power which proceeded to capture, despite its slow-paced strategy, the beauty and bounty of Mother Nature in Man's enduring works of the Humanities, Art, Science, and Technology.

To my information, such a method of approach has not been applied before to the study of Gurbani—which, for the uninitiated, seems to have little in common with Architecture. But having discovered Creativity as common ground between the two, I have tried to view Gurbani as an epoch-making work of (Spiritual) Architecture with my distinct professional tools.

It is to be hoped that my method of approach to the exegesis of the Sacred Scripture will provoke fresh thinking on the subject, and motivate scholars of other backgrounds to see Guru Nanak's Bani in a new light—holistically.

CHANDIGARH, 09 July 2015

SSB

## PROLOGUE

This work “*JAPUJI: Exegesis & English Poetic Rendering*” is quite simply a testament of why and how an architect sees the same things in the world so very differently from all those who pursue only one calling and/or have their perceptions conditioned by the regimen of their chosen specialisations. An architect *actually* uses the expertise and experience produced by the four major fields of human endeavour: the Humanities, Art, Science, and Technology.

No other single discipline known to humankind, to my information, ever does so with the same resilience of spirit nurtured by an ongoing inter-disciplinary approach to problems of Creativity in different media. Therefore, using my professional tools and methods, as an architect, I have been able to delineate the architectonics of Guru Nanak's Japuji. I dare say this is a much wider and deeper treatment of the subject—as may be readily seen from the outcome of this enterprise. Architecture is the crucible of an unending Creativity from which human civilisations have continued to emerge one after another in refreshing new forms and identities throughout the course of history.

Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism lays the foundation for a non-denominational, non-communal, non-sectarian, non-ethnic system of Holistic Humanism whereby anyone and everyone is urged to an optimistic View and a fulfilling Way of Life. Struck by its inebriate wonder, the seeker is persuaded to live according to the dictates of *Dharma*, The Divinely Designed Cosmic Moral Law, without the need for clerical mediation or creedal defections.

An appeal to his Reason (discriminating mental faculty) is constantly made so that the Sikh (Guru's *Shishya* or disciple) develops a healthy and wholesome understanding of the why's and wherefore's of workaday existence. He is encouraged to develop his own dormant powers into endowments of his Spiritual Sovereignty. He is enabled to appreciate that the Art of Living is the highest form of Creativity which must be lived to be believed. Emphasis on Action, grounded in *simran* (Divine-Remembrance) and *sewa* (Altruistic Progression) is meant to awaken the seeker's Soul-Consciousness (*suri*) to the Celestial Melody (*anhad*) of God's Word (*shabda*) and to sustain thereafter his unrelenting quest for Salvation-in-Flesh (*jivan mukti*)—here and now. This is the single most magnificent feature that distinguishes the Sikh Faith from other World Religions which preach the concepts of heaven and hell in a notional world.

## ARCHITECTURE OF THE JAPUJI

*Japu* or *Japuji*, universally known as *Japji Sahib*, is a written version of the divine message received in his Revelation by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539 CE). It begins with *Mool Mantra* or the statement of creed, leading to a *Sloka* and followed by 38 *pauris* (literally, ladders), or steps, or hymns, and completed with a final *Sloka* which some attribute to the founding prophet's successor Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552 CE). Employing architectural terminology, however, I have used the word 'level' for '*pauri*', underscoring the implied, but rarely understood, message that humans' spiritual growth is essentially a vertical movement. *Japuji* appears at the beginning of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* which was compiled by the Fifth Master Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606 CE).

This Holy Book or the Sikh Bible was declared by the Tenth and the last Master Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 CE) to be the *Living Guru* of the Sikhs. *Japuji* is revered amongst the most important Bani or 'compendium of revealed verses', and is daily recited by the Sikhs worldwide as the first Bani in *Nitnem* (routine prayers). *Japu* is widely accepted to mean *to recite* or *to chant*. It also means to understand as is cited in *Gurbani* (Utterances of the *Guru* or Spiritual Preceptor): *Aisa Gyan Japo Man Mere, Hovo Chakar Sacha Kere*, in which '*Japo*' connotes intuitive grasp of spiritual knowledge or divine wisdom, *not* worldly wisdom.

According to "*The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*" by Harbans Singh (published in 1996 by the Punjabi University, Patiala), "...*Japji* is the most riveting Sikh Prayer recited by the devout early in the morning. The composition is not assigned to any particular raga or musical measure, as is the rest of the Scriptural text..."

It further adds that "The entire composition including the Mool Mantar, two saloks and the thirty eight pauris form the sacred Morning Prayer *Japji Sahib* or "*Japu Nisanu*". It serves as a prologue to the Scripture and encapsulates Guru Nanak's creed and philosophy, as a whole..."

"The message of the "*Japu*" is abiding in nature and universal in application. It simply describes the nature of Ultimate Reality and the way to comprehend it, and is not tied to any particular religious system. In a word it simply defines Sikhism, the religious view of Guru Nanak..."

Guru Nanak founded the Sikh Faith, the youngest and most dynamic of world religions with its *life-affirming* spirit, with an unrelenting emphasis on involvement in, rather escape from, everyday life. He has used a staggering variety of metaphors to communicate the benefits of his Revelation. His language is so spontaneous that it seems to spring up from the artesian wells of super consciousness because his targets are the common folks who have been the most cruelly oppressed and most wily exploited throughout the course of human history.

His Revelation set forth in the common's language as pragmatic spirituality can be experienced here and now, and practised by all and sundry during workaday existence without the intermediary or intervention of a *pir* or a *pundit*. His marvellous metaphors have been spontaneously drawn from varying cultural and geo-political situations of his discourses that he held with peoples of the world with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Without any inhibitions whatsoever Guru Nanak adopted words from other languages in his *Bani* (Holy Word) to make it truly the Sacred Scripture of entire Humankind. For instance, the key words which we daily use umpteen numbers of times are *Raza* (Will) from Persian; *Hukm* (Edict-Fiat) and *Sahib* (Lord or Master) from Arabic. This was his unique way of engaging in a stimulating, soul-searching inter-religious dialogue by using other people's language to offer to them a refreshing view of Spiritual Realities as the intrinsic splendour of Truth that he demonstrated to be the primal attribute of God who performs the familiar functions of Creation, Protection/Provision, and Destruction all by Himself without anyone else's intervention or assistance or advice.



Guru Nanak's Mysticism is grounded in Revelation and, therefore, a truly unique 'experience' that he communicated through his distinguished Creativity or artistic 'expression' underscoring the little-known fact that Poetry is the Language of Prophecy: All Prophets are Poets although all poets are *not* prophets! The moot point to appreciate and fix in mind firmly is that, unlike many scholars of all genres, creeds, and diverse learning, Guru Nanak *Bani* is fresh and original and, by no means, a rehashing or syncretism of prevalent Hindu or Islamic religious thought. In fact, Guru Nanak is the only prophet who wrote down his revelatory experiences himself unlike other founders of religions before him whose teachings were recorded much later after they had left this world.

With this brief exposition, the readers may concede that since my profession is Architecture it is only natural for me to examine Japuji as the art and science of Building Design. The four elements of Architecture, namely, Space, Structure, Form, and Time are built into an edifice with the tools and methods of Design which, in one sense, is synonymous with Composition (the act of putting together different parts to form a meaningful whole), and has to do with all the arts. "Design adds to plan (a mental image of the end-product) an emphasis on intention (as artistic or divine intention) is the disposition of individual members or details, often thereby suggesting a definite pattern; since it is used frequently in reference to a complete work it often implies reference to the degree in which order, harmony, or integrity have been achieved in spite of diversity in the parts, or in which there is the beauty that results from unity in variety," [Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms, 1968, p. 611].

Let me familiarise you with Architecture of the Japuji in terms of: (a) Design, and (b) Structure and Form. "Design" entails concept of the created work and, indeed, operates as a genetic imperative in the act of creation. "Structure and Form" are what give Architecture its materiality or physical existence. "Space" is the container, like a room in a building, of the Design intent, which, in the case of the Japuji, is the message of the Word (*shabda*) as revealed through Guru Nanak. "Time" is the chronometric scale of its validity, veracity, and durability—besides the implication of the seeker's movement from one level (*pauri*) to the other, until he falls in love with the Japuji like he does in the case of the house he lives in.

It is to be hoped that the reader will experience the kind of thrill that this writer does when he himself recites Guru Nanak's Japuji in terms of the palpable excitement of moving in, around and up, this magnificent Edifice of the Soul. There is so much to discover, to absorb, and to live upon—until the entire exercise becomes a habit of the mind (*sahj*): a long stillness of prayer couched in aesthetic appreciation of the beauty and bounty of God's many-splendoured creation.

Let me now dilate upon the two major aspects of Guru Nanak's Japuji: (a) Design of the Japuji, and (b) Structure and Form of the Japuji.

### **(a) Design of the Japuji**

Japuji, in its original form, is the name of Guru Nanak's *magnum opus*, which is the sheet anchor (e.g., chief support; first and last refuge for an earnest seeker of Truth) of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, The Holy Book of the Sikhs (literally, disciples of the Guru, the spiritual preceptor—or the one who dispels the darkness of ignorance by

transmitting to the Sikh the light of truth). *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (henceforth abbreviated as SGGS and used as such in this book) a 1430-page volume, literally, means "Mr Book" because the Sikhs revere the scripture as a living personification of God's Word revealed through the Guru. The same unremitting reverence is extended to "Japu" which becomes "Japuji" or "Japuji Sahib". The suffix "ji" is a cultural title of respect for the elderly and the venerable. Similarly, the word "sahib", as a term of respect given in India to persons of rank (and to Europeans), comes from Arabic as a synonym for "Sir" or "Mr". One can thus appreciate the high esteem in which Guru Nanak's most widely-read Bani, "Japu", is held by all Sikhs.

"Japuji", literally, is an exhortation to the seeker of Truth to "recite" what follows this title in the Scripture. This is of crucial importance because the word is preceded by *Mool Mantra* and followed by the creedal maxim: *Adi sach jugadi sach ... Mool Mantra* is compounded of two words: "Mool", meaning root, an essence; and "Mantra", originally, Vedic hymn. In its derivative (and, now, autonomous status), it means a mystic formula or a sacred text used as an incantation or to invoke the deity. When extended to music, it is believed to have mystical effect on the hearer. However, in the case of Japuji, the *Mool Mantra* stands for the Axiomatic Statement of Faith based on Truth revealed to Guru Nanak, the founding prophet of the Sikh Faith: The Way of the *Gurmukh* (literally Guru-oriented) or the humble Sikh who forever remains in a process of learning, or eternal studentship.

*Mool Mantra* has been treated here as a preamble to the Constitution of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, as the commonwealth of pragmatic spirituality, that subsumes all faiths of the world (*sagal jamaati ... all creeds*). In other words, the *Mool Mantra* sets forth axiomatically the ineluctable outline of a Democratic Socialism of Souls—offered by Guru Nanak on a platter of God's own infinite Mercy and Grace for the redemption of the entire Family of Man sired by the Almighty Father. It runs thus: God is the Sole Supreme Being; of Eternal Manifestation; Creator, Immanent Reality; Without Fear; Without Rancour; Timeless Form; Unincarnated; Self-Existent; Realisable by grace of the holy preceptor.

"Japu", which follows the fundamental creed noted above, thus becomes a prayer-chant that the seeker of Truth is exhorted to repeat *ad infinitum*. The maxim that comes next leaves no doubt as to this interpretation. Here goes: In primal time, in all time was the Creator; Nothing is as real as the Eternal. Nothing shall abide but Truth; the Eternally Unchanging Reality (of The Sole Creator Himself).

The Japuji, *Dhur di Bani* (i.e., straight from the Source), as revealed to Guru Nanak, was transmitted by him to others in umpteen discourses during his odysseys over long periods of time in India and other countries. The beneficiaries of his new-found Creative Mysticism were *siddhas*, *yogis*, mendicants, spiritualists, and the common folks. When he finally settled down at Kartarpur Guru Nanak assigned the task of editing and the arranging of *paunis*

(literally, steps) to his spiritual heir Bhai Lehna (later, Guru Angad Dev). Embodied in Japuji is the message of Truth along with an inspiring account of scores of virtues and qualities for the redemption of the human soul.

It consists of 38 *pauris* which start after the Creedal Maxim as noted before. A facile combination of the function of explanation and the narrative form conjures up an amazing Time-Space Continuum in which everything is presented with cinematographic palpableness and amazing immensity captured in sensuous simultaneity. The identification marks of the many masks and guises in which human beings masquerade; the victors; the victims; the heroes and the humble mortals; the wise and the fools; the virtuous and the vicious; the deeds one sows and the harvest one reaps; the saints and the sinners; the devotee and the renegade; the nature and the elements; God's infinite Attributes; the spiritual endeavour of Salvation through *dharma* (Cosmic Moral Law), *gyan* (knowledge), *sarm* (labour of love), *karma* (grace), and *sach* (communion with Truth) *khanda* (the five stated realms); are all there expounded in remarkable compactness and compelling beauty.

Devotional remembrance of God's Name (*naam-simrin*) has been spelt in an easy-to-grasp, common man's language. Its polite, yet irresistible persuasion, drives one into a self-help initiative of far-reaching consequence whereby one's life-long quest would acquiesce only in one's spiritual fulfilment on Communion with the Sole Creator; the bride-soul's Sole Spouse.

*etu rah(i) pat(i) paurbriyan charhiyai hoye ikees* (Japuji, pauri 32)

By climbing the steps so delineated in this Path of the Divine Husband, one eventually becomes merged with God's Own Light.

As may be seen, Guru Nanak's Japuji has been stated to be "Japu Nissan" in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. It means that this *Bani* (The Holy Word) is the march-flag for accessing the Realm of Truth. It is averred that whosoever has this *Bani* with him at the time of his death is welcomed to God's Timeless-Spaceless Home:

*Re re dargeh kahai na ko-on*

*Aao baith aadar sabhu de-on*

Nobody at the *Dargah* utters an unsavoury remark. But rather everybody welcomes the seeker's soul with love and reverence

The Japuji, in a nutshell, propounds and expounds all that lies in, and transcends, the techniques of *sravana*, *manana*, and *nidhyasan*—which mean, respectively: listening, believing, and encountering. This is a perfect compendium

of all virtues and qualities, derived directly from the Source. Imbibing them in one's life, by reading or hearing the Japuji, one can set oneself on the coveted Path of Salvation—by Guru's Grace.

The Epilogue of the Japuji is a *sloku* by Guru Angad Dev. It is the most marvellous finale to Guru Nanak's *magnum opus*, explicating as it does the quintessence of his Revelation, in picturesque imagery and palpable metaphor available to everyone, twenty-four hours of the day, every day, everywhere, during workaday existence. Its nuclear Noumena can be matched by no mythology, no metaphysics, no muse—yet known to mankind—as these disciplines rarely transcend the Phenomenal notions of Ultimate Reality.

Guru Nanak's Japuji is an Edifice (Architecture) of the Soul, whose Concept has been stated in the *Mool Mantra* (the creedal proclamation) as follows:-

Truth is the sole Infallible Principle of God who Himself is the Generator, Operator, and Destroyer (G-O-D). Truth is what is beyond the matrix of Space and Time; the two fundamental elements constituting the universes. Since all creation proceeds from them, there is an all-pervasiveness of this Transcendent Truth. Also, it is axiomatic that God being the Sole Primal Person looking after the three functions of Creation, Operation (and protection/preservation), and Destruction (or Re- Absorption), He is the only One of His Kind without a second.

All this tends to sound too abstract for the teeming millions. Guru Nanak, therefore, presents (as is revealed to him, not as he imagines, speculates, or philosophises) the concrete aspect of God for the benefit of all and sundry. He resolves the curious paradox by Naming the Multi-Dimensional, Many-Splendoured Immanence of God.

It is important to appreciate that Guru Nanak's Creedal Proclamation is neither Poetry (the Muse), nor Mythology, not even Metaphysics. Just the same, he uses poetry as the Language of Prophecy to give form to his Revelation in which there is logic of a suprarational kind. This logic is axiomatic by the very strength of its inner light in which awareness, not argument, apprehends the Spiritual Realities of Truth as Primal Attribute of God.

Thus he says: God is All-in-All, without assistants, co-workers, or managers. He is the Sole Primal Lord, beyond the Concept of Trinity: such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, or Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost (Spirit). Since God is the One, and Only One, in full unchanging command of all the functions of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction (including their materials and methods which too proceed from Him), He is without fear, and without enmity. Equals and Unequals alone suffer from these self-defeating emotions: fear and enmity.

God is an Immutable Being: He is the Supreme Law-Maker. Unincarnated (unlike what other religions believe and profess), Self-Existent. God is a Being that never dies, nor is ever incarnated. But always by Himself Exists.

Yet such a God is eminently (though not too easily) realisable if a Guru (himself an active transfiguring spark of his undiminishing splendour) gives the seeker the realisation he seeks as sacrament (*prasada*). Guru is the path-finder, or more appropriately, the door-keeper of God's Formless Mansion: The Realm of Truth (*sach khand*). Admittance to the Faith of Revelation is exclusively and eternally by the Grace of the Guru. The seeker moves Godward through the Gate of the Holy Preceptor, which is thus aptly called *Guru-Dwara*.

The one pre-eminent pre-qualification for admittance to *Sach Khand* is the remembrance-rife unbroken chain of prayer- chants (*Japu*) in praise of God. This is the mind-cleansing ablution preparing the seeker to a foreordained standard of purity without which probity is impossible to access.

And, then, Guru Nanak builds the Temple of God on the Four Pillars whose very material is Truth: the Unchanging, the Infinite, the Eternal—True was He before Time was born; True was He when Time began its course; True is He even now; True shall He evermore be [The Prologue of Japuji].

Raised on this Immovable Four-Pillar Foundation is a 38-Storey Edifice of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism in which he reveals to the seeker, step by step (*pauri* by *pauri*), the ascent of his soul whose restless wanderings through aeons of the phenomenal world acquiesce in bliss when it reaches the Realm of Truth (God's Own Formless Eternal Mansion or *Sach Khand*). But the austere impassivity of the seeker's self, the stoic exactitude of Truthful Living (*sachiar*) having attained to a state of unconditioned spontaneity (*sahj*) rests atop Truth at the 38<sup>th</sup> storey whose finial is the unmistakable Numero Uno of God's Unmatched Uniqueness: His Inviolable Monarchy over all Noumena, Phenomena, and Nothingness.

The Architecture of God's Temple, as revealed by Guru Nanak, is an absorbing Construct of Time-Space Continuum employing all the basic geometrical solids: cube, pyramid, cone, sphere, cylinder, tetrahedron, and prism.

**Cube** is the Four-Pillar Foundation, representing the concrete form of Transcendent Truth. *Kaaba* (Arabic for cube) is the holiest of the holy for the Muslims. It embodies both this-worldly (material) and other-worldly (spiritual) dimensions in the selfsame geometrical solid. The cube opens out to a Latin Cross when its six squares are developed on a two-dimensional surface, thereby representing Jesus Christ, Compassion Personified. No wonder the Muslims recognise him as one of their own Prophets. The Cross symbolises sacrifice as well as self-abnegation i.e., when one “crosses” oneself (as the Christians habitually do) one symbolically negates oneself. The beauty about Cube is that it is a perfect solid in terms of aesthetic appeal. All its six constituent surfaces are complete squares which admit of no disputation as to their proportion (a basic criterion in the evaluation of an object's aesthetic).

**Pyramid** is the most stable solid which no earthquake, however mighty, can raze to the ground because it is the widest at the base. Since its four triangular sides meet at a point, a pyramid also symbolises the arduousness of the seeker's spiritual ascent. Perhaps no other form is more difficult to demolish than the pyramid. No wonder the Egyptians, in their uncanny wisdom, chose pyramids as the most apt "houses for the dead". Impossible to bury under the sands, extremely difficult to demolish!

**Cone** is similar to a pyramid but more organic. It has no hard sides, only one seamless, continuous surface, springing from a circular base (dilution) and gracefully ascending to a point (concentration)!

**Sphere** is the perfect form when it comes to constant motion: an exact opposite of cube, marked by its unruffled poise. Cube is frozen; Sphere is fluid. No wonder sphere is the most prevalent solid in the entire universe. All heavenly bodies, stars and planets, are spheres dancing tirelessly in Space, which, according to Albert Einstein, is also spherical! Sphere, both by its fluid shape and ubiquity, best symbolises God's Omnipresence: All-Pervasive Palpableness.

**Cylinder**, capped by a hemisphere, gives the shape of the Nuclear Reactor in which fission builds up a chain reaction to produce enormous quanta of energy from a tiny nucleus. To my reckoning, the OM in OMKAR (also spelt as OANKAR), with its three basic sounds of 'a', 'u', 'm', is the Nuclear Reactor of the Soul, which is Matter (Body) become Energy (Spirit) through *Naam-Simran*.

*Naam-Simran* is akin to bombardment of the nucleus with neutrons in that *Naam* is repeatedly aimed at the nucleus, the crucial centre of soul-consciousness (*surt*), lodged within the cranium cavity. Countless repetitions of the Holy Name are aimed at producing a chain reaction so that the Energy released from the Soul (nucleus) could be marshalled for a God-Ward Ascent via the Cosmic Architecture revealed by Guru Nanak in his Bani, notably, The Japuji. Without such ebullient energy, the Soul cannot release itself from the enormous gravitational pull of EARTH-ly attachments of which the Body is a willing captive!

**Tetrahedron** is a solid of four sides, each an equilateral triangle. According to Buckminster Fuller, American designer-thinker, tetrahedron is the basic solid in the structure of the Universe. And it occupies the minimum space, besides its amenability to compound forms, which turn out to be the most economical too. He demonstrated his discovery through his world-famous invention: The Geodesic Dome, which employs the principle of tetrahedrons—to infinity!

Without **Prism**, the truth about light, that it is composed of seven colours (VIBGYOR: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red) could never have been revealed. While one prism breaks white light into seven colours, another one in conjunction with it absorbs the entire spectrum back into white light. Could there be a better and more

fascinating metaphor for God's Transcendence (Irreducible Oneness) and Immanence (Many-Splendoured Manyess)?

(b) **Structure and Form of the Japuji**

Architecture, fundamentally, is the Unmanifest become Manifest through Structure and Form in Time-Space Continuum. Therefore, the Architecture of God's Mansion, revealed by Guru Nanak in the *Mool Mantra* of The Japuji, is worth exploring as the Holy Personage takes the seeker, level by level, on his Spiritual Ascent through the 38-Storey Skyscraper—for his ultimate merger with The Source that abides in *Sach Khand*.

In terms of the analogy of Architecture, on the basis of which this study of Guru Nanak's Bani is being done, *pauri* corresponds to "step", "stair", or, more precisely, "level" or "floor", because the whole Edifice of Japuji is a 38-Storey Skyscraper. Starting from the nether world (foundation), it builds up, level by level, exposing the ascending soul to the Bounty and Beauty of God's Marvellous Creation, until it scales the Realm of Truth (*Sach Khand*). And thence towers beyond all Phenomena and Noumena to become a point (*bindu*) of the *kalasha* (finial) as a culminating feature of its Spiritual Architecture.

Immediately next to the Four-Pillar Foundation of *adi sach jugadi sach* ... is Level – 1, the ground floor, where rests Guru Nanak's first Sacrament for the seeking soul, in terms of concretisation of the concept he has enunciated in the *Mool Mantra*. The Number 4 in the foundation symbolises the four points of the compass, thereby covering the entire Space with its manifest-vacuity extending to infinity--and beyond. It also stands for Time in terms of its aspects of past, present, and future. The Guru mentions a state precedent to the creation of Time, thereby extending its manifest-temporality to Eternity—and beyond.

Thus, before the seeker begins his Spiritual Ascent, he is exposed to the Time-Space Continuum in which Time is the Fourth Dimension of Space, having (conventionally) only three dimensions: length, breadth/width, and height/depth. This is a scientific discovery of the highest order, made by Albert Einstein—the greatest scientist since Isaac Newton—who holds space to be spherical. The way Guru Nanak stresses this all-important fact is axiomatic.

The Time-Space Continuum, in Guru Nanak's Revelation, holds the interdependence, interrelationship, and interaction between Time and Space as *sine qua non* to their unique function as the two Elements of which the Architecture of Cosmos is made. The one and only one evidence of God's Incomparable and Inalienable Architectonics is the existence of Nature in its bewildering Bounty and breathtaking Beauty. Nature (*Qudrat*, Arabic word for God's might) has been created by God as a matrix of everything that flowed/flows from the Act of Creation: Life in all its charming forms – plants, insects, reptiles, birds, beasts, sub-humans, and human beings. For Nature's endless Evolution (Progression), God's Inscrutable Will pulsates through ALL Creation as His Palpable Immanence.

Mysterious may be the ways of God. But one can certainly get a glimpse of the mesmeric Mystery with the heart's-eye cleansed of the grime of Ego by pursuing Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism through which God's Name runs as an energising-illuminating Principle. In other words, the Divine Mystery, as manifest in the many-splendouredness of Nature, is both Creative and Mystical. The implication is that Nature, as a Product of God's Will, religiously carries on the functions of Generation, Operation, and Destruction—Creatively (as an index of Divine Immanence) and Mystically (as an index of Divine Transcendence). To enable the individual Soul to comprehend it in a fitful flash of self-realisation, the seeker must decode the message God has implanted in the deepest recesses of his Mind. Guru Nanak, as a Compassionate Prophet of Revelation, takes on *this* task as a Divine Assignment for the general weal of the entire humankind.

### Level-1

At the very first level (*pauri*), Guru Nanak approaches the problem with characteristic directness, daring, and (interactive) discourse. He demystifies the four major ways (which the lesser saviours claim to be efficacious : (a) ceremonial piety through purificatory ablutions, (b) speech-fasting: (*maun vrat*) i.e., self-imposed silence, (c) gastric fasting and over-indulgent acquisition, covering the entire gamut from sickening starvation to sumptuous satiation, and (d) proud pedantry, empty erudition, or winsome worldly-wisdom—or worse, the massive might of Metaphysics. Guru Nanak demystifies all the four categorically as superficial and misleading. And hastens to recover the disillusioned seeker from his shock of seeing everything (beliefs, myths, superstitions) demolished in one sure stroke -- by posing the question himself : How to demolish the impregnable wall of Illusion, how to be *sachiar*? In terms of the foregoing analysis, the term “truthful” means the four-fold preparedness of the seeker as a precondition to receive the Divine Grace: (a) purified, (b) quietened, (c) hungry (of food for the Soul) metaphorically, a heightened keenness of receptivity, with its attendant intensity and urgency, and (d) self-surrender as the highest form of metaphysical machinations.

The Guru answers the stated question with the same alacrity with which he posed it. This point must be noted with utmost care, for in it dwells Guru Nanak's supreme distinction as a Prophet of Humankind, notably, the helpless, hopeless, hapless Masses—whose life is an unbearable heartache of an interminable exploitation by the high and mighty of human society. Since he launches his Creative Mysticism by a daring and direct denial of the prevalent superficial and misleading ways of Salvation, or unfulfilled promises of a better life at an unknown time and place, I am convinced that Guru Nanak's Bani is most certainly none of these things: Myth/Mythology, Metaphysics, (mere) Poetry (the Muse), self-promoting Prophecy, rehashed Yoga, a precept/percept intended to beguile, or a subtle way of Proselytisation.



The disarming simplicity of his six-word answer should lend absolute credence to the point being underscored: *hukm rajai(n) chalna, Nanak, likkhyā naal*. God's Inviolable Writ is lodged within the seeker's Mind for ready guidance and obedience. The operative principle of his (Inscrutable) Will (*raza*) is the Edict-Fiat (*hukm*) whereby the Path of Truth is fore-ordained for the seeker. And since this *hukm*, which the seeker must unconditionally, willingly, and happily obey through thick and thin, lies within his own heart, he cannot/need not be beguiled or misled—unless he himself lets go under the exigencies of utmost privation or Ego-directed pursuit of ambition and carnal pleasures.

The word '*naal*' has another implication: this *hukm* is enunciated as follows: (i.e., in the next *paurī*). It seems to be quite the case because Guru Nanak, sticking to his characteristic clarity, purity, probity, and directness, is guiding the seeker step by step through his Ascent to the Realm of the Spirit. And, the next step, indeed, speaks exclusively and exhaustively of *hukm*, God's Edict-Fiat.

## Level-2

As stated before, God's Edict-Fiat is the Operative Principle of His (Inscrutable) Will. The two are not the same, as several scholars have tended to confuse. Will is Fundamental, the First Cause as applicable to God's Own Self-Existence (*saiḥḥang*)—and its extension into Infinite-Eternal Progression as discernible in All Creation, right from the moment He desires to make known his Transcendence (*nirgun* state) as His Immanence (*sargun* state).

All forms, all creatures come into being, honour conferred, lowliness begotten, sorrow and happiness received—by His Edict-Fiat. In one case, It bestows Grace; in another, the eternal cycle of births and deaths.

Before proceeding further, let me highlight the full spectrum of values, covered by Guru Nanak at Level-2, discernible in all creation: Truth (*bakhsis*: the aim of all metaphysical quest), Beauty (*vadiai*: the splendour and prestige of position and status), Goodness (*uttam/neeḥ*: the desideratum of virtue and vice in terms of placement in the social hierarchy), and utility (*dukh/sukh*: the index of material well being). Different branches of philosophy are supposed to deal with the foregoing universal values: Metaphysics (Truth), Aesthetics (Beauty), Ethics (Goodness) and Karl Marx's dialectic materialism (Utility: a value ushered in by the cult of consumerism, or, worse, as in the case of America, the culture of Conspicuous (euphemism for vulgar) Consumption, stylised as Throw-Away Civilisation! Therefore, the Timeless-Universal validity-probity-applicability of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism should be obvious.

He rounds up his Discourse by emphasising that "All that exists falls within the jurisdiction of God's Edict-Fiat—without any exception whatsoever!"

And he closes Level-2 by his characteristic self-illuminating, test-it-yourself, hint for the seeker whereby he not only can discern the All-Inclusive Nature and Scope of God's Edict-Fiat but also see for himself if he has correctly and fully imbibed it:

*"Nanak hukamai je bujhai ta haumai kahai na koi"*

One who knows His Edict-Fiat (as hereto revealed) will never indulge in the life-wasting sport of *I-am-ness* (or Ego, the word popularised by Sigmund Freud, Father of Modern Psychology).

The inference of Level-2 is that All Creation is the expression of God's Edict-Fiat and that total Law and Order (as against Lawlessness and Chaos or Disorder) prevails through it, Eternally and Infinitely. The one, who knows (and has imbibed) this Truth, lives in utmost Humility in God's Immeasurable Grand Scheme of Things.

Humility (not hypocritical, but honest to the core) is one of the most important Cardinal Principles of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism—and indispensable to the life of a Sikh. This aspect will be dealt with later in the present discussion. Let me first dilate upon the term "Humility". Humility is not an antonym of "Ego", at least for the purpose of this discourse. It is a weaning of the Mind from a life of Objective Reality replete with temptations, allurements, inducements, and incentives which, at best, fuel the fire of carnal craving and end up in a self-consuming (bodily) catastrophe. The Way of Humility is to *reorient* the Mind to a life of Subjective Reality (ever-deepening inwardness) in the pursuit of Spiritual Sovereignty of the Self. But Humility is a curious culture. When one knows one is humble, one is most certainly *not* humble. One is vain. *In which case, outward humility is often exploited as a guile for personal advantage!* Should that be the case [which it usually is], it would decidedly be better to resort to Honest Arrogance. At least, it is guilelessly forthright—and can thus never swindle anyone!

"Ego" is "I" or "Self"—that which is conscious, and "Egoity"—the faculty of consciousness and the ability to think—is the essential element of the Ego. By denying it, or worse destroying it, one would lose that by which human beings are distinguished from Plants (which have only life, but no sentience) and Animals (which have life as well as sentience, but no consciousness, at least of the kind to be arrogant and cunning). Human beings have life and sentience as well as consciousness. It is well-nigh impossible to define Ego. But I have come upon one definition after years of contemplation, supported/substantiated by empirical observation. Ego is Body-Consciousness. I think I am the "Body". But the Truth is that the "Body" is mutable. In that case, how can I continue my evolution to a fuller, deeper, broader, and higher life, if I am destroyed with the Body. Thus, reorienting (an Architectural activity) the Egoity from outward (i.e., the Body) to the inside (i.e., the Soul), the Ego itself is transformed into Humility.

In fact, the Ego regains its pristine glory in Humility in the light of the fact that "The Body is mine, *not* I the Body's!" In modern scientific parlance, Humility is the superconductor (i.e., it offers no or little resistance, thereby

causing no or little losses during the transmission of electricity) of Psycho-Spiritual Energy from the Source (or the Over-Self) to the Self; making it a live-wire bundle of electrifying enthusiasm, the *élan vital* of life. It should be obvious that true saints practising Creative Mysticism cannot even be touched by the high and mighty except by the Spiritual Engineers, the Devotees, living a life ordained by God's Edict-Fiat.

Some people object to Humility as being a doormat. My answer to this objection is Architectural. Body, being the Temple of Soul, deserves neat and tidy interiors. Good that it lets strangers of thoughts scrub their dirty feet on the doormat before they enter the inside (the mind). It will keep the inside of the Building – uncontaminated and hygienic. Guru Nanak underscores this basic Truth in his inimitable Creative Mysticism: "*Suchch hove taan sachch paiye*": Purity is a precondition for the attainment of probity. In the light of the foregoing analysis, it is more than clear that this purity is *not* ablutionary cleanliness or ceremonial piety. It, indeed, is HUMILITY: Consciousness cleansed of Egoity—through incineration by *Naam*-contemplation (Japu).

### Level-3

At this level Guru Nanak reveals that God's Edict-Fiat becomes known to all and sundry in a staggering variety of ways. And they mutely sing panegyrics to His Infinite-Eternal Graces according to their individual understanding, as an expression of their own endowments. The high and mighty sing of His Might. The bounteous of His Bounties sing: the virtuous of His Virtues ; the wise of His Omniscience ; others of His Powers of Creation, Preservation and Destruction; several of His Transcendence; many of His Immanence sing forever. And yet if these praises be extended countless times, one could not exhaust His Attributes. The takers tire of taking, over inordinate aeons of Time, yet the Benefactor continues giving of His Infinite Benevolence, Eternally. His Edict-Fiat autonomously separates His Divine Dispensation, and forever carefree He views in Sublime Bliss His Extrovert (Altruistic) Progression.

Guru Nanak captures in his Creative Mysticism another of God's Cardinal Principles by which He operates throughout His Attributive Immanence (*sargun* state): Extrovert (Altruistic) Progression, Infinite-Eternal.

### Level-4

Guru Nanak stresses and reiterates, at this level, that True is the Master, True His Justice. We continually crave of His Dispensation, and His Bounties freely flow. But the most persistent, and insatiable, craving is to see Our Maker, The Monarch of Our Lives. And the Guru, in his characteristic method of Discourse, poses the moot question (as he did in the first pauri) : "What offertory service must we perform to have a glimpse of the Divine Court ? What prayer must we offer to merit His Sublime Love?" And, as he did before, the merciful Guru hastens to answer the piquant question himself: "Let us, in the ambrosia-filled hours of pre-dawn, meditate on the majestic glory of The True One's Name."

In his continued sharing of the secret and mystery revealed to him, Guru Nanak, through Creative Mysticism, disentangles the two questions of “Good Life” and “Salvation”, of existential significance to all human beings. Good deeds *can* (and do) beget “Good Life” i.e., life of virtuous fulfilment, but *not* “Salvation”. Salvation can be earned *only* by God’s Grace. The metaphor, in the first case, is vesture, the Body, which the soul must “wear” through its endless evolution to a fuller, deeper, broader, and higher life—birth after birth. “*Mokh Dwar*” is the metaphor for Salvation, the door of *mukti*, which can be entered only if God so Wills. The prevalent four methods, discountenanced in the first *pauri*, are rejected again, by implicit reiteration. To my knowledge, no other religious leader has stated the problem of Salvation (and its solution) with such disarming simplicity, crystal clarity, unswerving conviction, and creative consistency. By doing so, Guru Nank subtly underscores the invaluable virtue of Humility when he proclaims: “*Nanak evai(n) janai sabh(u) aape sa(ch)chiar(u)*.” “Nanak, let it thus be known that the True One is All-in-All (in Himself, by Himself, for Himself).”

#### Level-5

In view of the Inscrutability of Divine Will and God’s Infinite-Eternal (i.e., Ineffable) Immanence – reaffirmed and reiterated in Level-4, Guru Nanak goes on to demonstrate the futility of human “thought, word, and deed” to comprehend Him in any way whatsoever. And he makes a succinct comment on idolatory : “He can neither be installed nor His likeness ever shaped”—Why? Because, in truth, “Untainted Formless, Self-Existent is He.”

At this point, I would like to highlight Guru Nanak’s distinctive (even matchless) civility and refinement of Discourse with the following historical (not Mythical) example.

Idolatry has been Hinduism’s mainstay. In sharp contrast, Iconoclasm is Islam’s fundamental tenet. The Muslims, in pursuit of this principle, razed hundreds of Hindu temples, idols and icons as invaders-rulers of Hindustan saying that they were *but-shikan* (idol-breakers), not *but-prast* (idol-worshippers). Desecration was their way of saying (in barbaric, brutal terms) what Guru Nanak has proclaimed (not merely said/stated) in such a civilised way. Because God’s likeness can never be shaped under any circumstances, by anyone whosoever, where is the question either of “making” His idol (*but*) or of “breaking” it. *Untainted is He, in Formless Self-Existence—Infinitely, Eternally.*

But the Guru hastens to commend a form of Worship peculiar to his Creative Mysticism. Serving, not merely worshipping (i.e., lip-service) Him, only avails that He may bestow honour on the devotee. God is the Repository of all virtues. Extol Him; hear and sing of His Glories; and let the heart brim with love for Him. Thus shall all misery depart, leaving the heart an abode of happiness.

Because all this transfiguration cannot occur naturally, Guru Nanak introduces the Guru, the Spiritual Preceptor, to guide the seeker in the why's and wherefore's of Worship. Extolling the Guru's Word, he says it is supernal symphony, the loftiest scripture, and all-pervasive, for God's Own Will abides in it. The "Guru" embodies all the traits of Isar, Gorakh, and the Mother Goddess. Having said so much, Guru Nanak once again underscores his Humility: "If His Quintessence were I to realise/ How would I utter it/By what power would I sketch it? Thus has my master confided in me: He alone is the provider of all—Never must I remain oblivious of Him".

#### **Level-6**

Guru Nanak discountenances here the ritual bathing at holy places (Hindu *tirathas*), because all this would not avail in the seeker's Spiritual Pilgrimage without God's express Approval. Throughout God's entire creation, the Guru says he sees, there is absolutely nobody who finds fulfilment except by His Grace. And he reminds the seeker that, within his own spirit, God has lodged the most precious of gems and rubies, which the Guru's Word may unravel to him. The concluding lines of the previous *pauri* are used again as a poetic refrain to reiterate the overriding virtue of Divine Contemplation.

Realising that the solution of a problem lies in the nature of the problem itself, Guru Nanak points to the seeker the indispensability of an inner life. The fulfilment he is deluded into seeking in material well-being is offset by the treasure trove that his Mind itself bears, albeit without his knowledge!

#### **Level-7**

Slowly and steadily, Guru Nanak is taking up other issues like inordinately-long life, the prestige and power of sceptre and crown—and exposing their worthlessness for want of God's Grace, the heady euphoria of Mammon notwithstanding. So he says, even if one's longevity be ten times the duration of four yugas (Hindu Mythological very very long periods of time), even if one be known in all the nine continents, commanding universal following, and fame and praise from all mankind - all this will come to grief without God's Grace. And one would be treated as the most insignificant of worms, with the very reprobates pointing accusing fingers at him!

The Guru is underscoring the inviolability of Monotheism, time and again, though in a different metaphor, by insisting on the Truth revealed to him that God alone confers merit on those lacking it, and it is impossible to visualise or see anyone else who may bestow any virtue on Him.

#### **Level-8**

The next four *pauris* from 8 to 11 are devoted to the virtues and fruits of hearkening (and taking to heart) the Holy Word. At this level, Guru Nanak elucidates them as follows : attaining to the state of *siddhas* (Hindu claimants of supernatural powers) *pirs* (Muslim spiritual preceptors), gods, and supreme yogis (Yoga Masters) unravelling of the mysteries of Earth, the Bull (Earth's prop in Hindu Mythology), and Sky; cosmic secrets of isles, regions, and nether worlds—above all, immunity against Death. The concluding couplet, which is a poetic refrain repeated in the following three *pauris*, assures the seeker that God's devotees are forever in bliss because their suffering and sin are annulled by hearkening (and imbibing) the Holy Word.

### Level-9

The list of advantages is expanded to include: exaltation to the state of Shiva, Brahma and Indra (in Hindu Mythology, Destroyer, Creator of the Trinity, and Prince of Gods, respectively); acquisition of praiseworthy qualities; knowledge of esoteric powers of personality; and attainment of scriptural wisdom.

### Level-10

Further gains are stated as: attainment of truthfulness, contentment and spiritual illumination; the merit of bathing at sixty-eight holy places (Hindu *Tirathas*); conferment of academic honours; and the spontaneous fixing of the Mind in meditation.

### Level-11

The innumerable gains of hearkening (and imbibing) the Holy Word are concluded thus : knowledge of deep spiritual truths; supreme holiness compounded of a sheikh's (Muslim clergy) wisdom, a drip's virtue, and a sovereign's might; even the spiritually-blind find their path; and the unfathomed deeps yield their inaccessible secrets.

The inference of these four *pauris* is that one must heed the Holy Word in all its Spiritual (*not* Metaphysical) ramifications until It is fully absorbed in one's soul-consciousness (*surt*) whereby one's way and view of life becomes God-oriented. For such is the index of *sahj* (unconditioned spontaneity) whereby "thought, word, and deed" are purified preparatory to the Soul's re-absorption in the Source: The One God, as The First Cause, and Its Ultimate Effect.

### Level-12

From the preceding four steps of suniai (hearkening and imbibing the Holy Word), Guru Nanak takes the seeker further up for an exposure to the realm of Belief as the bedrock of the Edifice of Spiritual Life. The following four *pauris* 12 to 15 deal with *manne/mannai*, taken to mean by different expositors "reflection" (on the Holy Word). Their interpretation seems to be based on the three initial steps—*sravana*, *manana* and *nidhyasan*--recognised as indispensable in the traditional Indian theological system for inculcating spiritual discipline. "*Manana*" thus can mean one of the three or all the three: believing, obeying, and reflecting. In my view, all the three meanings are

simultaneously intended. This is why Guru Nanak has repeatedly placed high premium on the seeker as an individual human person responsible and accountable himself for all his acts of omission and commission. This being so, blind faith is hardly the belief the Guru would ever commend. Therefore, *manne/mannai* means believing after putting the idea to the intellectual rigours of deep reflection (*nichaar*), and thence obeying it as God's Edict-Fiat (*hukm*) so that all actions that spring from, and are regulated by, such believing-reflecting-obeying are spontaneously sanctified by connection with The Source, that is Perennially Pure—and beyond contamination by anyone, any means, whatsoever.

My preference is for the term "Faith-Fixed", which I have coined for usage in the exposition of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism. It may be conceded that the "Faith" so "Fixed" in God's Grace can *never* be blind (i.e., undiscerning). Only it sees with the eyes of innocence and Humility, and takes all risks (and, by reward, pleasures) in living a life of service, sacrifice, and surrender.

By virtue of their placement on the higher levels of the Edifice of Spiritual Life, the Faith-Fixed are superior to those at the preceding four paurs. This Guru Nanak underscores with great punch in the opening statement of Level-12: "Ineffable is the stature of the Faith-Fixed. Whoever attempts to size it up must in the end regret his vanity." The following lines reaffirm and reiterate this proclamation: "No pen, no paper, no scribe's skill could ever do full justice to that sublime stature."

The concluding couplet is once again a poetic refrain repeated at the end of each of the following three *paurs*. Here goes: "So immaculate is the Quintessence of God's Name that only the seeker, whose Mind in Faith is Firm-Fixed, can ever realise it."

God as Truth is Unattributive Transcendence (*nirgun*) i.e., Self-Existent (*saibhang*) when He needs no Epithet or Nomenclature. But as *sargun* i.e., in a state of Attributive Immanence, He must have One. Otherwise, how could Man ever address Him. Although, in the *Mool Mantra*, Guru Nanak has mentioned several Attributes whereby God may be addressed, in the delineation of his Bani subsequently, he has fixed "Naam" or "Name" as God's Epithet or Nomenclature. Once again, Guru Nanak's unique Creative Mysticism comes to the fore offering a simple solution for what seems to be an irresolvable paradox. The word "Name" has several connotations: that by which a person or a thing is known or called: a designation: reputation: fame: a celebrity: family or clan: authority: assumed character. It is this impressive array of possible meanings that "Name" is the most appropriate "Name" for God's self-assumed character i.e., His Attributive Immanence. The simplification, which Guru Nanak repeatedly adopts to state the most esoteric in common intelligible idiom, is especially noteworthy.

### Level-13

Guru Nanak exposes the seeker to other realms of Spiritual Ascent. Says he : the Soul consciousness and Mind of the Faith-Fixed are awakened, and all the stages of enlightenment opened onto him, neither does he receive any buffets in afterlife, nor is he stricken by the terror of the Angel of Death ...

### Level-14

Further endowments of Divine Grace are here enumerated: the Faith-Fixed meets no obstacle on the path of Salvation, and he advances God-ward universally acclaimed, never straying into the blind alleys of sects and cults, for *Dharma* (The Cosmic Moral Law) is his unshakable prop...

It must be noted that Guru Nanak's averment here is categorical in proclaiming a Faith founded on The Cosmic Moral Law. His is, therefore, not a Religion in the narrow sense of sectarianism, communalism, and denominationalism. Which is why he did not at all feel the need to proselytise—to convert, to wean seekers from their own existing faiths. *Dharma* is the most Catholic, because it is the Timeless-Universal God-Ordained Cosmic Moral Law. It transcends ethnicity, socio-political boundaries, and national exclusiveness. This is the grandest endowment of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism to the entire Family of Man, Fathered by *Ek Oankar*. Hence, the soulful salutation-cum-prayer: *Guru Nanak Naam Charhdi Kala, Tere Bhaane Sarbat Da Bhala*, which has a universal applicability, appeal, and advantage. By the Power of the Holy Name, let spirits be forever in the Ascendant, and, by Divine Dispensation, let general weal prevail.

### Level-15

The Faith-Fixed assuredly finds salvation, his kith and kin are liberated too, the power of Faith liberates both the preceptor and the disciple--above all, the Faith-Fixed does not have to go a-begging...

The psycho-spiritual Energy, which is released by fixing the Faith in Naam, has an electro-magnetic field akin to electricity. It affects the Agent as much as it does those surrounding him. And it works, without discrimination, to the benefit of preceptor and disciple alike—in a manner no other system, however rigorous, may ever do.

Guru Nanak in the use of his Creative Mysticism, for the general weal of the world at large, once again introduces a simple test to set the Faith-Fixed apart from charlatans of all genres. The one who has his Faith firm-Fixed on the Name is no longer a beggar. He is a benefactor of mankind. Through a highly-civilised Discourse, Guru Nanak categorically disapproves the life of mendicants, ascetics, fakirs. By implication, they are an unsavoury burden on human society--besides their fruitless self-indulgence in pseudo-spiritualism. While exploiting the gullible, they actually mislead them. Also, noteworthy is Guru Nanak's reaffirmation and reiteration of his fundamental tenet : That



God-Oriented Souls attain to a state of spiritual sovereignty and self-sufficiency--the point of Purity and probity from where their Extrovert (Altruistic) Progression flows spontaneously into Socially-Beneficent Action.

The poetic refrain at the end of each of the four *pauris*: "So Immaculate is the Quintessence of God's Name that only the seeker, whose Mind in Faith is firm-Fixed, can realise It", is a remarkable delineation of the Path of Self-Realisation in the simplest of terms. It warns the seeker against straying into blind alleys of sects, cults, and other prevalent secretive methods of professed salvation!

### Level-16

In this *pauri*, Guru Nanak is using one of his favourite tools of Discourse for maintaining the creative continuity of the fundamentals of his Creative Mysticism enunciated by him in the preceding *pauris*. These are followed by the introduction of a new subject: Cosmogony (literally, a theory or a myth of the origin of the Universe) wherein he takes up (and completely explodes) the prevalent Myth(s). This technique is akin to a run-on line in the couplet of a poem [e.g., Let me not to the marriage of true minds/ admit impediments... Shakespeare in one of his sonnets]—the first line, or hemistich, completes its sense only by the two following words which run on into the second line of the couplet: "admit impediments". As will be shown subsequently, Guru Nanak uses this method with great efficacy—and repeatedly so, for that precise reason.

Let us revert to the summary part of Level-16. The five elect (panch parwan) are those whose attributes have been enumerated in the previous *pauris*, as representing five different classes of devotional Creative Mysticism with the selfsame Source : (a) Those who abide by (and imbibe) God's Edict-Fiat (*pauri* one); (b) Those who reflect on the majestic glory of The True One's Name; (c) Those who never remain oblivious of Him; (d) Those who hearken (and take to heart) the Holy Word; and (e) Those whose Faith is firm-Fixed after deep and persistent Reflection. Hence "the Elect" are the true Spiritual Representatives of God who have attained to this state by the rigorous yoga of *Naam*-Absorption and bear the stamp of Divine Approval. Significantly, here the Guru is introducing the sublime structure of a unique Panchayati Raj (Rule of the Village Parliament): A form of self-governance by people's own elected representatives according to the dictates of an unwritten constitution upheld by *Dharma*, The Cosmic Moral Law.

Their number comes to 5, rather mystically--which has come to acquire an inviolable Ethical Authority in the Sikh cultural milieu and spiritual tradition. Therefore, the conventional meaning of the word *panch*, as symbolising "the elders of a clan, tribe or fraternity", has come to stay -- as is doubtlessly corroborated by the adage: *panjaan vichh parmesar* [God Himself presides where five good-intentioned persons get together].

The literal meanings of the lines relating to the foregoing subject at Level-16 are: Those approved of Him are God's (Five) Elect, honoured among fellow human-beings, exalted they abide in His Sublime Presence—and welcome are they at the Divine Portals. Though they are Five, they are in spirit One, for their Guru is the One Common Source: meditation fixed on The One i.e., *Ik (Oankar)*.

If one were to speculate the Creator's Infinite-Eternal Estate, one shall find It above count and competition even after the deepest Reflection.

And, now, Guru Nanak moves on to take up the question of Cosmogony.

Of Compassion is born the Bull of *Dharma* that holds the Universe by the strings of Contentment. One who realises this Truth is instantly enlightened and knows that the Mythical Bull (of Hindu Mythology) cannot carry the enormous loads of the world!

Note, how Guru Nanak completely explodes the prevalent Myth of a mere Bull supporting the Earth on its horns—with characteristic finality, and utmost clarity, which is a hallmark of his Creative Mysticism. And he goes on to show why?

Earths are there beyond this Globe, and yonder there more and more—what Power holds all these worlds aloft. Surely, a mere Bull cannot It be, for the Bull must needs another earth to stand upon for carrying the burden of *this* one.

Here, I would like to reiterate that Guru Nanak's Bani is neither Mythology, nor Metaphysics, not even Poetry (the Muse)—nor mere Mysticism or Creativity treated as be-all and end-all of intellectual and/or psycho-emotional pastime.

Mythology is a body of Myths i.e., commonly-held beliefs that are untrue or without foundation. Metaphysics, with its characteristic addiction to far-fetched conceits, is largely speculative. Poetry (the Muse) is a metamorphosis of figments of imagination into make-believe imagery. Mysticism in its esoteric withdrawnness is an alienation from the mainstream of life. Creativity, practised as an end-in-itself, is socially-alienated self-indulgence. All these in their imbalanced pursuits end up as Mythomania: a psychiatric condition in which one begins compulsively lying or exaggerating to an abnormal extent. Against this background, it should be easy to grasp the distinctiveness of Guru Nanak's unique approach.

By virtue of his Creative Mysticism, he actually *sees* (as palpably as he sees you and I) what's happening in the Universe. When he asks, in the act of exploding the Myth, "Where is the Mythical Bull standing when, in the vast emptiness of Space, countless worlds twirl about—unsupported? He is posing the question on the basis of a firsthand empirical observation which he himself makes. Nobody—absolutely nobody, anywhere in the world—had proclaimed the Truth in such categorical and convincing terms, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century! Does one still need a proof of the Guru's unique Revelation?

Let me dilate upon this issue a little more. The advent of Guru Nanak was the time of Renaissance in Europe when discoveries, which would change (and have since changed) the world, were being made in plenty. Suffice it to mention only two: Columbus discovered America (in his search for India), and Copernicus announced that *The Universe was not geocentric* i.e., the Earth was not the centre of the Universe, thereby exploding the Myth of this planet's unchallengeable doctrinaire importance. In brief, both the Oriental and the Occidental Minds were wallowing in the cesspool of superstitions, myths, caste discrimination, colour prejudices, and racial narrow-mindedness.

To proclaim a Faith of the kind that Guru Nanak did was a magnificent turning-point in the history of Human Civilisation. With his Creative Mysticism, he ushered in a World of Perennial Modernity—rescued from the inhumanity of soul-stifling dogmas, mind-boggling doctrines, life-alienating "isms", and misleading ideologies. He wrote a Charter of Human Rights—dauntless in its daring, refreshing in its rationalism, holistic in its humanism, divine in its spirit, and unageing in its form. Such Human Rights as: the right to live and work with dignity and honour; the right to think for oneself; the right to feel for others; and the right to worship The One Eternal-Immutable God, Our Sole Maker, Provider, Destroyer—were, and still are, unprecedented.

Let me now revert to Level-16, the remaining part of this *pauri*, which is a crucial resting-spot in the Magnificent Edifice of the Japuji. The Lord God has scribed with His ever-moving pen creatures of myriad shapes and hues, whose staggering account can never be computed. None can ever say how limitless are His powers, how superb His forms, how boundless His boundaries. His One Word created the Cosmic Expanse (akin to the Big Bang theory) and myriad streams of Life ran in. And the Guru, in a Trance of Wonder, asks The Almighty Father: "What worth have I to even attempt contemplating the miracle of Thy Omnipotence, O Lord?" And in a spontaneous self-surrender, he concedes: "Too unworthy am I even once to be made a sacrifice unto You. Whatever pleases You is always an Act of Grace; You are Eternal-Immutable, O Formless One!"

### Level-17

*Pauris* 17 to 19 are devoted to the explication of the vastness and diversity of God's Creation. At this level, and the next two, Guru Nanak enables the seeker to have a glimpse of numberless good and pious souls on Earth, juxtaposing them with numberless sinners and savages who infest the globe. Why the Merciful Lord suffers and

sustains the latter species, and how indulgent He is to creatures of diverse types, is deeply ingrained in the Inscrutability of His Will. In his characteristic Humility, Guru Nanak accepts this Mystery with loving adoration.

He paints a vast Canvas of Pulsating Simultaneity and Expanding Infinity in awesome detail, amazing colours, and sprightly textures. In this, and many other respects, Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism is truly exceptional.

Says he: Countless are the prayer-chants, forms of devotion, and worship, modes of penance; and innumerable are those who from memory recite the Scriptures, ascetics who have renounced the world, devotees contemplating God's Attributes, and seeking illumination; myriads are those dispensing charity, crusaders braving the enemy's steely blows, and those in uninterrupted meditation on vows of silence. And having shown so staggering a panorama of human life on Earth, Guru Nanak retreats into Humility, conceding his inability to carry on, and confronts His Creator, in self-surrender : "Too unworthy am I even once to be made a sacrifice unto You ... Whatever pleases You is an Act of Grace; You are Eternal-Immutable, O Formless One!" The concluding lines are a poetic refrain taken from the preceding *pauri*—and also have been repeated in the next two *pauris*. This is Guru Nanak's charming way of driving home a subtle but significant point. Recoiling verse such as this sets his Creative Mysticism apart in a class by itself. In its rhythmic reiteration, it directs its appeal (as against dogmatic or doctrinaire imposition) to human reason, and persuades the seeker into a willing heart-to-heart dialogue with Divinity. Also, it underlines Guru Nanak's way of repeatedly returning to The Source for replenishment of psycho-spiritual Energy through a Mystically-Completed Creative Circuit.

### Level-18

The explication, in its characteristic tenacity to capture the Immensity of Creation, continues in a gushing spring of Divine afflatus. Says the Guru: Countless are the purblind fools relapsed into folly, besides those living off others' flesh through thievery and dishonesty; the innumerable tyrants ruling by brute force, the impetuous cut-throats and merciless murderers, the abounding sinners leaving behind a trail of sin; numberless liars who only falsehood spread, perverts self-abased in filth, and a myriad slanderers whose heads are burdened by others' calumny.

At this crucial point, Guru Nanak springs a pleasant surprise by which, in my considered opinion, he is exalted manifold as a Prophet of the Masses. His Humility is, indeed, deep and genuine, as he tirelessly demonstrates. But this time, he calls himself *neech* (depraved and lowly) to expose his Will-Abiding Mind as an Eternally clean slate on which God can inscribe anything that pleases Him. Therefore, he emphasises, in no uncertain terms, that just because he is describing a world of sinners, it does not mean that he thinks himself to be above sinning—an essential index of human fallibility. No world religious leader has spoken of himself so disparagingly!

Says he: "The sinner (or depraved / lowly) Nanak thus enumerates evil-doers as he understands them after thoughtful consideration." The Guru, here, highlights another ethical virtue: restraint against glib impoliteness of

speech, and the persistent need for Reflection in the process of "Thought, Word, and Deed" as a matter of Civilised Discourse. This everyone, as an individual human person, owes to himself as personal responsibility and moral accountability. This point already highlighted cannot be overemphasised.

Look, how beautifully the poetic refrain fits into the winding-up of the verse as a conclusive reiteration of Humility. Says Guru Nanak: "Too unworthy am I even once to be made a sacrifice unto you. Whatever pleases You is always an Act of Grace; You are Eternal-Immutable, O Formless One!"

### Level-19

The theme of numberless persons, places, things, events, and activities has been brought forward to this concluding *pauri*.

Myriads are God's Names, numberless the Spaces created by Him, and inaccessible are countless Universes-- but even to use the term "countless" is tantamount to carrying the burden of sin on one's head--

However, what is the way out of this predicament? Expressing his personal quandary, Guru Nanak beseeches (if implicitly, so as not to disturb either the flow or compactness of his God-directed narrative) the Almighty Father's permission to go ahead. Now, this is where the Guru draws upon Logic of the Awakened Soul to validate the indispensability of using "words" for communication even when the theme is so clearly inexpressible. This departure in Discourse must be noted as it sets apart Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism from the fruitless ontological meanderings of mere Metaphysics.

So, says he : "Yet words must be used to express God's Truth, as also His praise; by words are His panegyrics sung, and His Attributes deliberated upon; of words are scriptures made, and by words are these chanted, and by words is delineated the Way of Communion.

From this point onwards, Guru Nanak's verse changes from a linear narrative to a cyclic reiteration. This is something no Metaphysics, however erudite and esoteric, can ever hope to accomplish. The aesthetic resilience with which Guru Nanak turns about, and the artistic plasticity with which he shapes the Spiritual Circuitry, comprise the matchless merit of his Creative Mysticism.

And his Divine afflatus flows back to The Source when he goes proclaiming thus: "Yet God, Who decrees them all, Himself transcends the Writ of words. To man comes only whatever He decrees. The entire Creation is His Manifest-Name. Nothing beyond His Name portends—How must I contemplate and express Thy Omnipotence ?

"Too unworthy am I even once to be made a sacrifice unto You. Whatever pleases You is always an Act of Grace; You are Eternal-Immutable, O Formless One!"

### Level-20

Having helped the seeker climb half-way up the Edifice of Truth, Guru Nanak reveals to him, at this level, the futility of ablutionary rituals. From now onwards, he will share the esoteric knowledge of Mind-cleansing, for as he so convincingly shows all kinds of purificatory practices, however well-meaning and widely-accepted, are only skin-deep. They may be a charming cosmetic for the Body, but do precious little to purify the Mind. Here, he coins the apt metaphor of washerman, washing, soap, and all. In his Creative Mysticism, he displays an unparalleled genius for utmost simplification. Here goes : "Grime-smeared hands, feet and Body may be cleaned with water; (similarly) soiled clothes may be washed with soap; but the Mind defiled by sin and evil can be scrubbed clean only when Name's detergent performs the Divine miracle. Good and Evil are no mere words: each action is recorded for the after-life (on the principle) : As you sow so shall you reap—Nanak, God's Edict-Fiat regulates the process of transmigration."

The Divine Writ lodged within the human Soul is reaffirmed, and the seeker exhorted to grasp the Cosmic Moral Law (of Cause and Effect) that governs All Creation.

### Level-21

From this *pauri* begins the exploration of other realms of the human Spirit. Guru Nanak shows the seeker the futility of austerities and other religious practices, the fraudulent sense of achievement inherent in their performance notwithstanding. This is a crucial step in the Spiritual Ascent of the Self, for hearkening and imbibing (after due reflection and critical evaluation) the sacrosanctity of his Revelation, one would save lots of time, energy, and efforts by avoiding what are essentially infructuous pursuits.

At this level, the subjects dealt with are as follows: The merit of pilgrimage, ascetics, compassion, and charity is as insignificant as that of a sesame seed, but he who hearkens and absorbs in his Mind the Divine message with loving adoration and Faith firm-Fixed takes a holy bath at the pilgrimage-centre within him thereby purifying his soul.

All virtues are Thine, O Lord; none within me abides--how could true devotion be achieved without cultivating noble qualities, in the first place. Salutations to Him—The Self-Existent One, Sole Architect of All Creation--Whose Form is Manifest-Word : Eternal, Holy, Beauteous, Ever Blissful!

The meaning of the four words which comprise the seventh line of the *pauri* is much involved: *suast* (i), *ath* (i), *bani*, *barman*, giving rise to a host of expositions. Some of them are: (a) From the Self-Existent proceeded Maya (Spacio-Temporal Reality) whence issued the Word that produced Brahma (Creator in Hindu Trinity) and the rest; (b)

O Primal Word, Maya, Brahma, Hail to Thee; (c) Salutations to Him, Creator of Maya, Whose Form is the Holy Word; (d) Hail to Thee! Let this praise of Thine through *Bani* be a salutation to Thee from me in the manner of a Brahmin.

Given my conditioning as an Architect, the reasons for the above translation should be obvious.

At any rate, Guru Nanak now proceeds to deal with a subject which religious leaders, priests, pundits, and *mullas* have speculated and debated for centuries—without reaching a consensus. The scientists themselves are divided on the question of Genesis.

At what hour, on which occasion, date and day, season and month did God bring forth All Creation? They would have recorded it in their Sacred Scriptures if the Brahmins had found the answer. Nor does the exegesis of the Holy Koran show that the Muslim divines ever knew it. The Yogi too does not know the date and day, season or month. The Lord God, who created the Cosmos, Alone knows the Mystery of the Genesis.

The charming way in which Guru Nanak explicates the case must be pointed out again. His is Logic of the Soul which beats all ratiocinative cerebration at its own game. How could anyone—just anyone (including the Scientists who, with their tenacious insistence on empirical observation, never accept anything without corroborative evidence) refute that neither the Brahmins (Hindu claimants of *Brahmyana*—The Creator Brahma's Knowledge) nor the Muslim divines, not even the Yogis (proud proponents and practitioners of religious austerities) know the answer, for if anyone really knew his own holy book or sacred record would show the astronomical data concerning the Genesis.

Such forthright directness on Guru Nanak's part rendered/renders even the haughtiest of pedants speechless! Then, what is the big idea of wasting time, energy, and effort on fruitless Scriptural, Metaphysical, Mythical, and other disputations--except as armchair speculation for passing (more appropriately, killing) precious Time.

And, then, the Guru relapses—as is his wont--into the helplessness of the unknowing mind, and in all Humility, invokes His Grace for resolving the human predicament :-

How may I address and how adore Him; How may I describe Him and how know Him--and the Guru, then, points out that Many, O Nanak, profess to know Him—each claiming to be wiser than the others.

Having reiterated God's Ineffable Quintessence, Guru Nanak concludes the *pauri* with a stroke of finality.

Supreme is the Lord, Sublime His Being—only thus far, O Nanak, I dare say: Just what He Wills comes to pass. And he who brags of omniscience shall never be welcome at God's Portals.

### Level-22

In this *pauri*, Guru Nanak presents a bewildering glimpse of the Cosmic Expanse such as had not hitherto been even attempted. A reference to the fact that even Science knew precious little in the times of the Guru, the explication offered by him at this level is, indeed, revolutionary. It speaks volumes for the authenticity and magnificence of his Revelation, which is made of an altogether special stuff: Creative Mysticism wrought in the mint of the Soul, furnished, fuelled, and fired by Divine Grace.

God has created millions of nether worlds and the heavens above, and the wise have given up the account in despair. The Vedas (Hindu Scriptures) too declare their helplessness unanimously. The Semitic texts speak of eighteen thousand spheres. Vain is such count, for it touches not the fringe. To one Truth all this points. That is, there could be count, His Infinity none may yet measure or state. No wonder, therefore, many lives have been swallowed (in the Vortex of Time and Space). For Nanak, suffice it to say: God is Supreme, and He Alone Knows His Stature Himself!

What a wondrous spectacle has Guru Nanak shown to the seeker at Level-22: a whirligig of Matter a-twirl in Space-Time Continuum-- Infinitely, Eternally! The Guru is now preparing the seeker for a mesmeric viewing of the Spectacular Panorama that he will presently unfold for his steadily-awakening Soul.

### Level-23

The devotees' laudation of God, repeated over and over again, cannot measure His Immensity. Unknowable is He like the ocean into which streams and rivers merge--without ever being able to size up its content. Mighty monarchs, with dominions vaster than the seas, and mountains of riches beside, measure not to the merit of a tiny ant whose mind on God is ever fixed.

Guru Nanak, in this *pauri*, introduces another apt metaphor: the ocean and the stream, to enable the seeker to know that God is Unknowable, with regard to His Immensity and Glory. And nothing shall avail, not even the absolute might of monarchs, because God's Knowledge cannot be *willed* by the Mind. Just the same, if the seeker be as earnest as the tiny ant, his heart can certainly be a receptacle of Divine Grace. The implication is that, rather than waste time on vain attempts to know God's Grandeur, it is advisable to win His Love by an earnest choiceless (i.e., without any other motives) inner seeking. That is what, according to Guru Nanak, is the sole purpose of the Soul's human incarnation.



#### Level-24

Since God's Immensity is Unknowable, Guru Nanak carries forward the theme of Devotion, which is the only authentic and direct way of feeling His Grandeur in terms of Divine Grace. Such an "Unknowability-and-the-Mind's-curiosity-to-know" syndrome would strike the intellect-dependent Man as self-contradictory. But the difficulty presents itself only when one places more premium on the need to *prove* to another rather than on the urge to *probe* for oneself. To me, this is quite clearly a case of Egotism—the arrogance occasioned by "I"-making in the Workshop of Body-Conscious Mind. Guru Nanak, thus, commends the Path of Devotion (not mechanical cymbal-rattling—but Active Self-Surrender (prompted by the Existential Exigencies of Human Life) to seek God's Grace, the only sure way of earning for oneself the dear delight of discovering for oneself the Providential palpableness of Our *Peerless* Maker. Needless to say that this method cannot *prove* anything for anyone but yet give to the seeker a soul-stirring Glimpse of God's Majesty and Mystery in a fitful flash of Self-Realisation. The verse reads as under:

Myriads are God's qualities, endless their count. Innumerable are His doings, and His Bounty. Infinite is what He sees and hears, Inscrutable His Design. Limitless is His Creation whose bounds are invisible. Many yearn to know His Extent, yet it ever eludes them. Who knows His Limit? The more it is explained, the further it beggars description. God is the Supreme Master: Exalted is His Station--Supreme, above all, is His Name. Only one endowed with as great a Stature as God Himself might reckon His Extent. In sooth, He alone knows how Great He is ! Devotion to Him, Nanak, is a blessing that issues forth from His Own Glance of Grace.

#### Level-25

Continuing the theme of Divine Munificence, Guru Nanak shows here the Many-Splendouredness of God's Infinite Bounties. Here goes: God's abounding Grace beggars all description, the Benevolent Lord Himself expects no returns for what He so boundlessly gives. Myriads are the acclaimed heroes who beg at His doorstep, innumerable such others whose count is hard to keep, numerous are the fools in carnality languishing, numerous those ungrateful wretches who always receive yet deny, numerous the fools with greed stricken, to the lot of many falls endless suffering and penury—Bountiful Lord! This too must be accepted as Your Gift.

This is one of the profoundest sparks of Revelation in Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism. How could endless suffering and penury be also God's Valuable Benediction? The answer may baffle the intellect-dependent Man of Worldly Ambition. God bestows (not inflicts) suffering and penury on souls to give them a chance for taking recourse to Reflection (whose virtues he has earlier enumerated). The implication is that, when one is lost in the jungle, it does not at all help to frantically chase around. The *Reasonable* thing is to stop, reflect, assess, and know what step should be taken next to gain lost ground--the path that had been lost in a bog of disordered aimlessness. In other words, such

a fateful opportunity of God's Gift for Man to retrace his steps from Worldly pursuits—and to (re)orient his Mind to the Magnetic Compass of Soul-Consciousness for his (homeward) voyage to The Source. The remaining verse reads as under:

The bondage in transmigration or liberation therefrom is effected as pleases Him, without anyone's intercession whatsoever. Were some reprobate to attempt divulging this Supreme Secret, bitter shame shall come his way. God alone knows what each one receives, and Himself dispenses it. But few ever confess to this underlying Truth. The Boon of His Adoration the Lord selectively bestows--and the fortunate beneficiary should be reckoned, Nanak, as the King of Kings.

The value attached to unflinching devotion to God, as a rare Divine Grace, must be noted. Spiritual Exaltation is, indeed, the highest of riches anyone can aspire to (and receive) in *this* very human life.

### Level-26

Guru Nanak in this *pauri* employs the metaphor of commerce to reinforce the seeker's Faith that the Creative Mysticism he is sharing is no other-worldly speculation. It is replete with the matter-of-factness of *this* world. The text reads: God's Attributes are invaluable, and so also is the Commerce in them. Blessed are the warehouses wherein these lie, and blessed their traders. Blessed are those who come to fetch them, and blessed who with His Bounties depart. Priceless is the gem of devotion to Him and priceless those merged in it. Invaluable the Divine Justice, invaluable the Court dispensing it. Infallible are the scales of His Judgement, and honorific those who with Grace acquit themselves. Priceless are His Bounties, and perfect the rank of quality on them. Infinite is God's Generosity, and priceless His commands.

Beyond words, Invaluable is all this evermore! Those who venture to express it are so absorbed as to be lost in ecstasy. The Vedic and Puranic texts tirelessly well on Him, and many a pendant make erudite commentaries. Brahmas and Indras attempt to reckon His Grandeur—so also the Gopis and Krishna [the Mythical milkmaids and the celestial cowherd], Shiva, and the Supreme Yogis, and also countless Buddhas created by God. Demons and deities pay obeisance to Him. Sages and Seers too adore Him. All attempt to utter His Greatness. Many hold learned discourses on Him, and others too venture evermore. Still more strive but leave the world, unsuccessful. If God were to create as many more to sing panegyrics to Him evermore--woefully off the mark would they yet be. His Stature is as Great as it pleases Him to assume. The True One Himself, O Nanak, knows His secrets. Mark him as the greatest of fools, who such knowledge arrogates to himself.

Guru Nanak leaves no doubt about the Immeasurability of God's Matchless Majesty, and , while commending the Path of Devotion, demonstrates that even this could not stand up to the impossible task of reckoning His Grandeur. As the First Cause, God reserves the Divine Right of assuming any stature that pleases His

Will. The explication is that He is always Greater than the Sum Total of All That He Himself creates. Strange though it may sound but I hold it to be true that this Unwritten Law of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts applies in the human situation too. Man is always greater than what he does or has accomplished-- because he carries in his Soul the Seed of Divinely-Designed Progression. In other words, Man is a Possibility that never quite becomes a Fact—in the ultimate and absolute sense of the word!

### Level-27

In his untainted innocence, dyed in the Splendour of Godhood, Guru Nanak, here, expresses his profound sense of wonder when he childlike queries :-

What is that Portal like, which edifice that Mansion resembles—enthroned, where God watches and sustains All Creation ? Innumerable are the instruments, the notes, the players who laud Him. Countless the musical modes and the symphonies, and the musicians orchestrating His panegyrics: Air, Water, Fire laud Him; *Dharmaraja* lauds Him at His Righteous Portal. *Chitra Gupta* lauds Him in keeping track of men's deeds for *Dharmaraja* to reckon. Resplendent in the light given by Him, Shiva, Brahma, and Devi (Mother Goddess in Hindu Mythology) sing God's laudation. Indra seated on his throne and surrounded by deities, Yogis in Mystic-absorption, devotees in contemplation, men of continence, charity, poise, and indomitable heroes—all His praises chant. Age after age, all men of learning and mighty seers laud Him in holy texts. Ravishingly beauteous Fairies of heaven, earth, and the nether world laud Him. The jewels created by God laud Him, along with sixty-eight pilgrimage-centres. Heroes of supreme might, and all the four modes of Creation sing of His praises. So also the regions, continents and the entire Universe propped by His support. Only such are inspired to laud Him as win His pleasure: These be His devotees dyed in the joy of Him.

Numberless more beyond my reckoning supplicate to God, says Nanak.

By painting such a glorious picture of God's Incredible Immensity and His countless adorers, eulogisers, Guru Nanak leaves the seeker gasping for breath at the Infinite-Eternal Spectacle. And himself quietly takes recourse to self-surrender to complete the Celestial Circuit between the Self and The Source.

The remaining part of the verse reads as follows: You are Eternal, O Lord of the Universe, ever True is Your Name. You, who have created this Universe, are, have ever been, and shall evermore be (true). Having created beings of diverse species and shades, you look after your Handiwork, as flowing from Your Own Grace. Whatever pleases You comes to pass, none can command You, O Lord, You are, King of kings. May Your Will always be my life's mainstay!

Two salient points should be noted in the foregoing part of the verse. One, Guru Nanak has drawn the seeker's attention to the Prologue of the Japuji: 'Truth was He before Time was born; Truth was He when Time began to run its course; Truth is He even now; and Truth shall He be evermore. In the above verse, the phrasing is slightly different, though: You, Who have created this Universe, are, have ever been, and shall evermore be (true). This is a very distinguished feature of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, as has repeatedly been pointed out in the present exposition. Since it is not Metaphysics, the Guru is not lost in ontological meanderings or ratiocinative cerebration. Nor does his imagination ever come amiss because he is *not* making new Myths. This is not even an exclusive life-alienated Mysticism which ends up in blind alleys. Much less is it mere Creativity indulged in for the sake of sensuous self-gratification.

The second point brings out the Quintessence of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism. Continual remembrance of the Holy Father is the Soul's staple diet. Just as the Body subsists on what it is *materially* fed—regularly, the human soul also needs to be fed. Only its food is different. It is a feeding by way of replenishment of Psycho-Spiritual Energy by repeatedly returning to The Source, much in the manner of an Electrical Circuit. Elsewhere, the Guru has proclaimed this truth employing the Metaphor of food (i.e., in this case, Spiritual Diet): I hunger after the True Name. Remembering I live; forgetting I die (i.e., my soul shrivels and decays) *aakhaan jeevaan, visarai mar jaon*, (SGGS, p. 349).

### Level-28

In this *pauri*, Guru Nanak takes on the Yogis, Hindu ascetics, who practise the yoga system, consisting in the withdrawal of the senses from external objects and entailing long continuance in unnatural postures, tedious breathing techniques, etc. Yoga (from, Sanskrit, meaning union) is a system of Hindu philosophy developed by Patanjali (fl. 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC or 5<sup>th</sup> century AD), showing the means of emancipation of the soul from further transmigrations/incarnations, and union with the Supreme Being. It purports to cultivate strict physical and mental discipline by means of which such emancipation is attained. Having shown that *Ik Oankar*, The Eternal-Immutable Sole Creator of the Universe, is beyond the reach and grasp of any system whatsoever, Guru Nanak, here, exposes the Yogis' hypocrisy of made-up physical appearance in which they hide their impure inner lives. And, then, as is truly exceptional of his Creative Mysticism, the Guru offers an apt alternative by transforming the yogic paraphernalia into a metaphor of metamorphosis.

Guru Nanak devotes four *pauris*, (28-31) to explicate the theme of transformation of the ritual austerities of Yoga into the ethico-spiritual qualities worthy of attainment by a genuine seeker. The verse reads as under:-

Let contentment be the earrings  
Modesty your begging-bowl and pouch  
Smear your Mind with the ashes of contemplation

From realisation of mortality, fashion your quilt  
And keep your mortal frame virgin-chaste  
Let Faith firm-Fixed in God be your code and staff  
Make the Brotherhood of Man your Yogic sect  
Thus gaining victory over *your* self  
May you conquer the whole world  
Salutations to the Primal Lord, Who  
Through all Time ever remains  
Immaculate, Eternal, Immortal  
Attired in Immutability

Guru Nanak has stressed, with great punch, yet gentle persuasion, the plenipotency and plenitude of Universal Love, against the weird practices of certain Yogic sects, as infallible means of emancipation. His tenacious insistence in defence of an inner life of the Spirit, grounded in ethical conduct during workaday existence, should be carefully noted.

The propriety and probity of the Divine Model--Lord God Himself--have been emphasised in the concluding couplet, which is repeated as a poetic refrain in all the four pauris. Needless to say that Guru Nanak never fails to complete the Intangible Circuit of Spiritual Energy that must constantly flow between The Source and the Seeker--via the Guru.

### Level-29

Acquisition of occult powers to perform miracles was deemed to be the exclusive object of prolonged prayers and self-mortifying penances by *Naths* and Yogis. Guru Nanak categorically disapproves of them as ignoble, impious, and vainglorious exercises, diverting Man as they do from his life's true goal which is seeking, in all Humility, Communion with God.

The present *pauri* deals with the stated theme, and the verse reads as under:-

Let enlightenment be your diet, compassion the dispenser  
Let in each heart divine Melody reverberate  
God is the Time Master  
Who holds sway over the whole Universe  
Misguided ambition prompts the desire for miraculous powers  
The universal system is regulated by

The twin-principles of union and separation  
To Man's share falls what is destined  
Salutations to the Primal Lord, Who  
Through all Time ever remains  
Immaculate, Eternal, Immortal  
Attired in Immutability

"Diet" and "Dispensation" are the key-words in the text, reinforced by the twin-principles of union and separation. The Humility of Loving Adoration, *not* the haughtiness of miraculous powers, is the Path of Emancipation in Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism.

### Level-30

The Mythical Goddess Maya (literally, Illusion : figuratively, the creative mutable principle of the Universe) is believed to have given birth to the "Holy Triad"--Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva--the Hindu Gods of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction, respectively. The Myth is so widespread in Indian society, and so deeply-ingrained in Hindu psyche, that it is well-nigh impossible to explode it—much less dislodge it. Following the dictates of his Revelation grounded in God's Irreconcilable Monarchy, as the One and Only One Primal Person, Guru Nanak hands out the Divine Knowledge as Sacrament of Grace to the earnest seeker. Dilating on this theme, the text of this *pauri* reads as under:-

The Immanent *Maya* in union with The Primal Person  
Conceived and delivered the accepted three Regents:  
The Creator, The Preserver, and The Judge  
[But this is the pervasive illusion, in fact]  
For, all that there is what God Himself ordains  
Without being seen, He sees all at work  
This, indeed, is the Wonder of all wonders!  
Salutations to the Primal Lord, Who  
Through all Time ever remains  
Immaculate, Eternal, Immortal  
Attired in Immutability

A palpable picture of the Ultimate Reality emerges. That God is Himself All-in-All and, in His Unchallengeable-Unchangeable Sovereignty, He does not need any assistants, regents, or agents to perform the Fundamental Divine Functions of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction. For one thing, He has empowered the

universe to be a self-regulating/self-monitoring Autonomous Cosmic System under the Sovereignty of His Own Will. For another, He *sees* too, without being Himself seen, everything, and everyone, at work—which is a Wonder of all wonders. The point underscored is God's Indivisible, Self-Existent Identity which neither brooks, nor has, any Rival Power of any kind!

### Level-31

Guru Nanak confronts the prevalent belief that this world is Maya i.e., unreal—something illusory to be shunned. His Logic of the Soul endorses the empirical observation through which all and sundry—and every kind of theistic and atheistic belief--sense, perceive, and cognise Objective Reality. This common-sensic view should put aside Mythology and Metaphysics, at best, as necessary evils—even besetting sins of ignorant, misguided minds. In such a scheme of Creative Mysticism, expounded on the basis of palpable Revelatory, Awakened-Soul *seeing*, there cannot be/need not be any room for speculation or Myth-making. It, therefore, renders both the Premise (i.e., The First Cause) and the Conclusion (i.e., Its Natural Effect) autonomously Real. Guru Nanak, holding God to be One and True, without a second, from the very Proclamation of *The Mool Mantra*, tirelessly reiterates it with the electrifying force of Emotion-Reason-Intuition that neither Mythology nor Metaphysics can ever hope to match--much less outdo. Because The Creator is Perennially True/Real, all His Creation must necessarily be True/Real, too. Hence, the Guru's tenacious insistence on *Naam*-contemplation, Service (as Applied Spiritualism), and Socially-Beneficent Action [as Extrovert (Altruistic) Progression] of souls evolving towards a fuller, deeper, broader, and higher life. The text of the *pauri* reads as follows:-

In the countless worlds created by Him  
Lord's seat and His stores abide  
Inexhaustible are His treasures  
[Though these were raised just once]  
God with concern and compassion oversees  
The Universe He created in His Own Likeness  
Salutations to the Primal Lord, Who  
Through all Time ever remains  
Immaculate, Eternal, Immortal  
Attired in Immutability

### Level-32

Having discountenanced, in the previous *pauris*, all known and imaginable ways of attaining Communion, Guru Nanak underscores the exclusive efficacy of singing panegyrics to God to receive His Grace as Sacrament on the salver of Humility. By using the Monumental (Architectural) Scale, which is the opposite of human

scale, he had shown the seeker the wondrous Bounty, Beauty, Diversity, and Mystery of All Creation as God's Manifest-Will. At this stage, now, he introduces another theme of fundamental import to the devotee. He pins down the almost-impossible task of winning over God to receive His Grace. Thus, employing the mesmeric tool of Monumental (Architectural) Scale, once again, he demonstrates the Mind-boggling task ahead that entails astronomical figures in devotional utterance of the Sole Name of the Lord of the Universe [*Ek Naam Jagdish*]. By implication, this is God's Holiest Name: *Ik Oankar*—with which Guru Nanak's Bani is launched in the *Mool Mantra*. The verse reads as under:-

If Man's one tongue were to become a hundred thousand  
Nay, even twenty times more  
If each such tongue were to utter Lord's Holy Name  
A hundred thousand times each instant  
Such may then be the Stairs of Devotion, to ascend  
To attain Communion with Him  
That may impel even worms to emulate  
Those thus ascending on hearing of Heaven's  
Impeccable Glory  
By Divine Grace alone, Nanak, one may attain to God  
Vainglorious is all bragging of the charlatans

The point to be noted is the Veto-Power that Divine Will has and, therefore, despite the titanic effort which the devotee is called upon to make, he must yet in all humility await God's Grace for Communion with Him. Man's wilfulness cannot *will* God's Will to yield. Hence, the need for his psycho-spiritual pliancy.

### Level-33

Guru Nanak takes up the theme of Mortal Might to impress upon the seeker the absolute indispensability of Humility as the Quintessence of Loving Adoration. Needless to say that, without these being there, in the first place, Communion is impossible to attain. The Guru, therefore, enumerates in this *pauri* various forms of Power that Man may acquire, but yet be quite helpless in the face of God's Omnipotence. The Guru thus conjures up a context in which to reveal to the seeker the enormous inequality that exists between Man and God in terms of Absolute Might. By the queer Logic of the Soul, Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism gently persuades the seeker *not* to waste his precious life in Ego-fancied combats with The Almighty Father. The charming amiability of his unique approach comes alive in the innocent challenge he throws to the arrogant, self-centred individuals: *Jis(i) bath(i) jor(u) kar(i) vekhai soi.*

Speech nor silence within Man's power lies  
Neither the will to ask, nor the urge to give



Neither life nor death on Man's striving depends  
 Not even power or pelf by Man's endeavour comes  
 Nor awareness nor knowledge nor reflection  
 Neither by his power nor praxis  
 May he achieve deliverance from worldliness  
 He who thinks high of his temporal power  
 Shall come to grief before God's Might  
 In this respect, Nanak, no Man is in himself high or low

In a nutshell, this *pauri* sets out the theme of Man's foreordained Duty to surrender his "Self" to Divinising by God's Inexorable Will, "Raza", propounded by Guru Nanak in the first *pauri* of Japuji. By his Ego-centric toiling Man achieves nothing to exalt his Soul because ultimately all lies in Divine Will, whereby what Man proposes God disposes in many inscrutable ways.

#### Level-34

In this, and the following three *pauris*, Guru Nanak is guiding the seeker to the final stages of his Spiritual Pilgrimage. Again, the Guru employs the Monumental (Architectural) Scale to capture the Immensity of the highest regions of Psycho-Spiritual Reality which his Creative Mysticism scales with matchless virtuosity. He takes the Universal-Timeless values of Truth (*Satyam*), Beauty (*Sundaram*), and Goodness (*Shivam*), cast in the palpable earthiness of Utility, the fourth value created by the Modern Age of Science and Technology. Needless to say that the last-mentioned value becomes sanctified through a subliminal touch with *Ik Oankar*, God's Manifest-Divinity, propped, sustained, and regulated by His Holy Name as the Directive Principle of All Creation. The text reads as under:-

God created Night and Day, Seasons and Occasions  
 Air, Water, Fire, and the Nether Regions  
 And, in their midst, installed the Moral Inn : Earth  
 Wherein dwell beings and species  
 Of myriad hues, forms, and lifestyles  
 Of names many and illimitable  
 All creatures on their actions are judged  
 At the Divine Court of Justice  
 As True as the Sovereign Judge  
 Wherein are seated His Own Elect in Matchless Majesty  
 Whom His Glance of Grace marks with Ultimate Approval  
 There the genuine from fake are sifted

Nanak, you shall know God's True Judgement

When you get there in the times to come

Ethics, *Dharma*, The Cosmic Moral Law, is the ineluctable matrix of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, whereby he insists that Life is a rare and difficult performing art which can be aesthetically appreciated and artistically (re-) created only by living it fully, deeply, and inspired. He has given all the technical knowhow, ethical knowwhat, and spiritual knowwhy in his own unique way delineating a Path of Life, grounded in constant connection with The Source, *Ik Oankar* [through the Holy Name-Reciting], and spontaneously extending it into Extrovert (Altruistic) Progression. Although, during such pilgrimage, the seeker can certainly feel the Spiritual Metamorphosis within the marrow of his bones, the final test of its success will be consummated when God marks the Purified Soul with His Ultimate Approval. Truth shall be minted, and quality-marked, only when the Soul has become malleable into Imperturbable Humility through the heat of enthusiasm for doing socially-beneficent work sustained by uninterrupted God-Remembrance. In its incomparable forthrightness, simplicity, authenticity, and live-mass-media telecast from The Source, Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism offers, without ceremony and discrimination, an intelligible, do-it-yourself, Pragmatic Spiritualism in these words : Work, Worship, Welfare; then, Wait and Watch, fully involved in the vicissitudes of Life in self-surrender to receive Divine Grace. Until that comes to pass, the seeker so disposed will yet stand to gain. He will certainly have earned a better life: fuller, deeper, broader, and higher before God quality-marks him as *jivan-mukta* [emancipated in *this* very world!]

### Level-35

The *pauri* begins with the concluding statement on the contents of the previous one. The Guru says: Such is the Order of the Realm of Righteous Action, the first of the Realms in ascending order of the Soul's Spiritual Pilgrimage: *Dharma Khand*. And he goes over to enunciate the law of the next one: the Realm of Enlightenment, or *Gyan Khand*. The text of the *pauri* is as follows:-

Such is the order of the Realm of Righteous Action

Law of the Realm of Enlightenment now follows:

Countless forms of Air, Water, and Fire therein dwell

Innumerable are there Krishnas and Shivas

Innumerable too are Brahmas fashioning universes

Of various forms, hues, and aspects

Many are the fields of endeavour there

Many the celestial mountains

Many the sermons delivered to Dhruva

Numerous are the Indras, spheres of Sun and Moon  
Numerous the continents and lands  
Many the accomplished Yogis, enlightened ones  
And supreme ascetics  
Many the incarnations of the Goddess  
Many are the species of gods, demons, sages  
Many oceans bearing the jewels  
Many are the modes of creation, many the forms of speech  
Many the lines of kings and sovereigns  
How numerous are the Revealed Scriptures  
And their followers  
There is no end to their count, Nanak.

The point, which must be noted, is this: That even Myths and Mythology have not been able to capture the infinite diversity of gods and goddesses, demons and ascetics, and all the paraphernalia that goes with Myth-making, a perennial pastime of the human Mind in which Imagination has the freest play. Guru Nanak's method of deploying the tools of simultaneity and juxtaposition, in the use of Monumental (Architectural) Scale as applicable to the Architectonics of Divine Creation, Preservation, and Destruction is truly unique. Thereby his Creative Mysticism becomes an all-time Classic of Pragmatic Spiritualism. His delineation of the Many vis-à-vis The One Sole Creator, in Mind-boggling detail, has a compelling beauty before whose Resplendent Immensity the Soul has no choice but to surrender. This is the most crucial point in Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, for it is from here that the seeker would view, in the euphoria of aesthetic enchantment, the spiritually-uplifting Spectacle of God's Eternal-Infinite Divinity—before he is reabsorbed, if He so Wills, into The Source. Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism is a Holistic Itinerary, Ethical Atlas, and Spiritual Guide for the Vagabond Soul that urges it to retrace its steps to undertake its homeward journey into the Realm of the Spirit. Slowly and steadily, it weans the seeker from the fake inducements of the Worldliness of Mammon into a Pilgrimage where more and better fulfilments await his ever-hungry self.

### **Level-36**

In this *pauri*, Guru Nanak concludes in the first two lines, his narrative of the Realm of Enlightenment, which is the next higher level to the Realm of Righteous Action. From here, he goes on to the next level: The Realm of Spiritual Endeavour.

The text reads as under:-  
Ethereal Effulgence blazes forth  
In the Realm of Enlightenment

In that sphere reign mystic melody, sublime visions  
Aesthetic wonder, and creative joy  
Beauty is the muted speech  
Of the Realm of Spiritual Endeavour  
Sculpted there are forms of enchanting exquisiteness  
Whose resplendence beggars all description  
Woe betokens the one who ventures to describe them  
Fashioned there are soul-consciousness  
Sensibility, Mind, and Intellect  
Forged therein too is the vision  
Of gods and supernaturalists

It should be pointed that Guru Nanak, here, reiterates what forms the Matrix of his Creative Mysticism : an unremitting effort on the part of the seeker, because Life, as pointed out before, is an exclusive Performing Art that is validated, authenticated, and consummated by *actual* living (and not by merely speculating or philosophising as an armchair luxury!) Thus, in his five-tiered staircase, he has put Endeavour (*saram*) in the middle, and higher than Knowledge and Morality. Thus, his Creative Mysticism is *not* a Religion of Monasticism or of Sensual Indulgence. It is Pragmatic Spiritualism of mid-stream involvement, *not* Mythology or Metaphysics or Mysticism of escape from the imperatives, exigencies, and vicissitudes of an intensely-lived experience. Those researchers, revivalists, and rationalists who have shown Guru Nanak's New Faith: Creative Mysticism, to be a syncretisation of Hinduism and Islam have unfortunately taken the husk for the grain. In this study, there is a persistent, if mute, plea for a fresh, holistic look at the Guru's Revelation as something straight from the Oven. And before long, if his Grace is upon them, they may be impelled to change their evaluation for their good—and the general weal of the Entire Human Community. The psycho-kinetic Kinship of Humankind beckons them to new horizons of aesthetic enchantment, transcending the sensory, perceptive, and cognitive experience.

### Level-37

Having prepared the seeker—with his Mind scrubbed clean of Egotism through the massive milling of the previous 36 *pauris*, Guru Nanak convinces himself from his Revelation that the former's soul is a suitable and sanctified salver for receiving the Sacrament (of Grace). He, therefore, takes the seeker to the next higher level : the Realm of Grace [*Karam Khand*]. Now, read on:-

Might speaks of the Grandeur of the Realm of Grace  
Nothing else avails there  
Abide there heroes of supreme might

Their hearts fired with God's Love  
    Heroines like Sita abide there too  
    In Lord's Praise mystically-absorbed  
    Indefinable is their exquisite beauty  
    Death touches them not, nor quite swindle  
    In whose Minds does God dwell  
    Devotees from all the worlds assemble there  
Cherishing His Love, enraptured in Eternal Bliss

As explicated in Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, the ultimate aim of the Soul's entire pilgrimage, is to transcend the experience of *Dharma* (Righteous Action), *Gyan* (Enlightenment), *Saram* (Spiritual Endeavour), and *Karam* (Grace), and to enter *Sach Khand* (the Realm of Truth) to abide there Eternally in the Divine Presence of *Ik Oankar*. The Dispensation of Grace is the unpremeditated, inscrutable operation of God's Edict-Fiat. So awesome is its Majesty and Mystery that Guru Nanak says: "Its expression is as hard as it is to put words into the mouth of steel !"

All the same, the Guru takes the seeker to the Most High and Exalted of all Realms. Just read on the remaining part of the verse:-

    The Realm of Truth is where The Formless One abides  
    Whence He unceasingly creates, showers Grace, and oversees  
    Countless orbs, regions, and firmaments  
    Extend there infinitely  
    Far exceeding in number all count  
Worlds upon worlds abide there, and countless forms too  
    By His Edict-Fiat are all these sustained  
    His Infinite Creation God watches over  
    In Blissful Progression  
    And reflects upon All, Eternally  
    So hard is its description, Nanak  
    That it's like putting words  
    Into the mouth of steel

### Level-38

Just as Guru Nanak has, during his unprecedented Discourse, placed certain *pauris* of crucial importance at certain intervals, in the exposition of the Japuji, he puts this particular *pauri* right at the end. This is by careful design, *not* by accident, the concluding part of his Japuji is a reiteration of his New Faith which is grounded in *Dharma*, The

Divinely-Ordained Cosmic Moral Law--and has nothing to do, it can never be overstressed, with either Mythology or Metaphysics or Mysticism or innumerable other-worldly "Paths" of Salvation and God-Realisation. This pauri re-stresses Guru Nanak's Impeccable Religiosity in which , unlike any known religious leader of the world, he proclaims in unequivocal terms, *ad infinitum*, that "Truth is the Highest of all forms of Reality, but Higher than Truth is Truthful Living (The ineluctable *Dharma* of a *Sachiar*). In doing so, Guru Nanak reaffirms the most important Cardinal Principle of his New Faith by drawing the seeker's attention back to where he got him started on his soul's Pilgrimage, thereby completing the Circuit of Psycho-Spiritual Energy--between The source and the Seeker via the Guru (the Transformed): "*keiv sachiara boiai keiv kurai tutai pal(i)*"—How to demolish the Wall of Illusion (i.e., Ego-Centrism) and How to be purified [to become worthy of The True One's Divine Grace]? So, here, the Guru shows the seeker the way of purging his self of the dross of Ego. This is to prepare him mentally-morally-bodily so that he lets go spontaneously everything in self-surrender before God's Will for his Soul's transfiguration from a Matter-Bondaged Existence to a Spirit-Liberated Reality.

All through the Discourse, Guru Nanak's emphasis always has been on the individual human person--an innocent, beguiled, and misguided psycho-kinetic entity--in existential need of path-finding for Salvation and God-Realisation. This is truly exceptional, and speaks volumes for his Creative Mysticism.

The verse, employing the metaphor of Mint, reads as under:-  
Make Continence the smithy, Perseverance the goldsmith  
Let Reason be the anvil, and Knowledge furnish the tools  
God's fear the bellows, penance the heat and fire  
Loving devotion the crucible, to forge the Immortal Vision  
In such true Mint coin the Holy Word  
Such a rare deed falls to their lot  
On whom is bestowed the Divine Grace

Blessed are they, Nanak, who are fulfilled by His Glance. In the concluding couplet, Guru Nanak, once again, as several times before, leaves the last and final judgement of God's Inscrutable Will.

The finale to the Japuji is a *sloku* authored by Guru Angad, the First Spiritual-Heir to Guru Nanak's Revelation. For centuries has this been an integral part of Sikh Faith's First Master's most widely-recited Bani. It is, therefore, incumbent that the explication of Japuji be concluded with it for the stated reason. Another reason is that Guru Angad's *sloku* is the most concise, succinct, and stupendous of all summaries of, and commentaries on, Guru Nanak's Japuji.

### **Epilogue** (*Sloka*)

Air is the vital force, Water the Progenitor

The Good Earth, Great Mother of All

Day and Night are nurses, caressing the entire Creation

The Righteous Judge reckons merit and demerit of everyone

His approval or rejection comes from each one's own actions

Those who, meditating on God, have earned merit

Through an unremitting moral endeavour

Saith Nanak: Their faces irradiate Divine Light

Through them, many shall find their final release

## INFERENCE

Guru Nanak's Japuji is a rich compendium of an amazing range of concepts, issues, themes, topics, and fields of human endeavour. Guru Nanak's Bani also takes within its sweep "What's What in the World" and "Who's Who in Myth and Reality". The subjects listed below are only illustrative, *not* exhaustive, of Guru Nanak's magnificent Bani.

Social mores. Culture. Commerce. Farming. Baptism. Customs. Conventions. Rites. Rituals. *Mantras*. Myths. Mythology. Metaphysics (truth). Aesthetics (beauty). Ethics (goodness). Politics. Logic (utility). Society. Sects. Cults. Householder's life. Pandit. Mulla. Qazi. God. Guru. Cosmogony. Prophecy. Salvation. Good life. Religion. Renunciation. *Dharma* (The Cosmic Moral Law). Worship. Prayer. Yoga. The Scriptures. Hinduism. Buddhism. Jainism. Islam. *Tirthas* (Holy Places). *Yatras* (Pilgrimages). Life. Death. *Avataras* (Reincarnations). Reward. Punishment. Gods and Goddesses. Heaven and Hell.

Study of Japuji vis-à-vis the Scriptures of major World Religions became an obsession with me—and the more I understood their message in the abstract the deeper my fascination grew for Guru Nanak's divine lyricism that stands apart for its profundity of message and the aesthetic enchantment of its expression. The result was that I was inspired to translate it into English poetry. In this unusual exercise my three-decade-long practice of writing poetry in four languages stood me in good stead, and I produced the rendering which I now have the rare privilege of sharing with my readers.

While I am at it let me say what I have understood of the praxis of identifying the right spiritual preceptor that Guru Nanak has stated most succinctly in his averment: *Shabda guru surt dhum chela*. In terms of history of the country where Guru has been, and still is, seen in 'human' form, Guru Nanak's Revelation must have sounded disturbingly revolutionary. Yet on close analysis it reveals a scientific truth that always has been there whether one knew it or not since the genesis of the universe. A popular, and widely-accepted, scientific theory says that the universe was born of Big Bang, and would return to its pre-creation state via the Big Crunch. Gurbani says that the universe came into being when God uttered the Word. This utterance was the incredible sound of the spiritual Big Bang. The sound was later identified by mystics as "Om" and "Oankar".

But other sanctified words are equally effective and Guru Nanak calls them God's Names. Therefore, he stresses the importance of *Surt* (Consciousness) getting tuned-in to the *Shabda* (Word) whose utterance produces *Dhum* (Tune) so as to create a perfect rapport between the *Guru* (Spiritual Preceptor) and *Chela* (Disciple). An interminable repetition of the exercise called meditation (*Dhyan*) brings the Consciousness to rest in Word to achieve what may be called an active silence. At this point the illimitable fruitless wanderings of the Mind that uses Consciousness as its vehicle come to a standstill and a state that Guru Nanak calls *Sabj* (Unconditioned Spontaneity) is attained in which Thought, Word, and Deed are in perfect, imperturbable alignment which synergises all planning, its commitment to writing, and implementation into socially-beneficent action subsuming individual 'Self' in the 'OverSelf'.

On these lines, Guru Nanak has prescribed a refreshing form of *Yoga* beyond the familiar fruitless twists and turns of the *Yogi* who takes the cumbersome exercise to the strenuous extremes of acrobatics and gymnastics. He gives *Shabda* the ambience of Music in which the former always takes precedence over the latter in which Sangeet is



provided by the prescribed *Raga* (Musical Mode). This method befittingly called *Kirtan* (literally, singing paeans or panegyrics to the glory of God) creates the *right* atmosphere to enhance the receptivity of the *Sangat* (Holy Assembly) so as to savour the divine food for the hungry soul.

While the measure of progress in Yoga is how good you become at performing those difficult *Asanas* (bodily postures) the conjoining the *Surt-Shabda* and listening to the *Kirtan* progressively helps the devotee in subduing the five inner foes: *Kaam* (lust), *Krodh* (anger), *Lobb* (greed), *Mob* (attachment), and *Abankaar* (pride). Yogi's yoga reinforces egotism whereas Guru's *Kirtan* cleanses the Mind to make it a worthy receptacle of God's grace. That's what the word 'Sikh' means: he is never a Master although he has mastered the five formidable inner foes but remains an eager learner life after life until he is delivered from the bondage of birth and death by God's glance of grace (*Nadar*).

## POETIC RENDERING

# JAP(U)

## THE SEED-WORD

G-O-D [Generator-Operator-Destroyer] is ONE

All-Inclusive, All-Pervasive

Truth, The Unchanging Reality

Transcendent Being

One may Name Him thus

Intrepid, Uninimical

Imperishable Icon

Beyond the Cycle of Birth and Death

Self-Existent

By the Grace of God, The Guru

Is this Creed Proclaimed

\*

Contemplating His Glory by a ceaseless Chant

\*\*

Truth was He before the birth of Time

Truth has He been since Time He bore

Truth is He, Nanak, even now

And Truth shall He be evermore

\*\*\*

### STEP ONE

A life-time of ablutions can't purify

Nor sustained spells of silence qualify

Nor endless feasting of the worlds satisfy

Nor a hundred thousand wits ever grasp it?

How, then, to be Truthful; this guile! How smash it?

Nanak, “Submission to His Edict-Fiat Who’s Master of His Will”

Is the Inviolable Divine Writ, the one Revealed in Original

#### STEP TWO

His Edict-Fiat bears forth bodies, yet inscrutable remain

His Edict-Fiat creates souls, and all status bestows

By His Edict-Fiat are high and low, pleasure and pain

By His Edict-Fiat one is set free, another comes and goes

By His Edict-Fiat is life’s bondage for one and all

Those who know His Edict-Fiat, Nanak, are ego-free and humble

#### STEP THREE

Some who are so endowed, His might eulogise

For some adorers, His blessings are what His power symbolise

Some sing the praises of His beautiful virtues and traits

Many another through metaphysics His nature contemplates

Some sing of Him as the Author of life and death

Some admire His power of infusing into the dead new breath

Some sing of Him as the One so palpably near

Some sing of Him as He who is distant, unclear

There’s no dearth of reckonings, or descriptions sane

Millions, nay, countless have tried but in vain

The Giver goes on giving, but out the takers tire

In aeons of births getting what all they desire

God runs the Universe by His Inexorable Decree

In joyous progression, Nanak, He—The Carefree

#### STEP FOUR

Unchanging is the Sire, True His Name, His speech, His love infinite

We only ask and implore—and so graciously He gives it

What can we offer the Giver for a glimpse of His court

How prayers must be worded to melt His heart  
Meditate on the True Name's glory in the ambrosial hours  
Good deeds beget good life, but salvation His grace confers  
The Omnipotent is All-Holy, Nanak avers

#### STEP FIVE

Who can make His idol, who knows the norm  
He who's form, form-giver, yet beyond all form  
For him, who serves Him, all honour ensues  
Sing of Him, Nanak, that mine-field of virtues  
Sing and hearken, and, in heart, a longing nurture  
To let sorrows quit, and joys to enter  
Guru's Word is the mystic sound, the Vedas: It's all-pervasive  
Guru is God, Gorakh, Brahma, and Parvati: The Goddess  
Even knowing it, I couldn't have this Truth vouched  
How could the Ineffable in speech be couched  
May I, with Guru's grace, be ever so blest  
That this Benefactor-of-All I mayn't forget

#### STEP SIX

A holy bath takes he who earns His approval  
Sans God's sanction, all actions are offal  
Wherever, through all the worlds, have I sought  
Sans good deeds, everything comes to nought  
Gems and jewels in his mind can be found  
If the seeker hearkens The Word's mystic sound  
May I, with Guru's grace, be ever so blest  
That this Benefactor-of-All I mayn't forget

#### STEP SEVEN

A life as long as Yugas four  
Even ten times as much, if one were to get

In all the nine continents be very well known

Had countless followers at one's behest

If one could earn a glorious name

And highest honour as one's asset

But if one were of His grace deprived

Hopeless, hapless, would one be, yet

One amid a swarm of wriggling worms

Forever confined to the filth of sin

Nanak, He alone bestows virtue on the virtueless

And endows the good with the wealth of goodness

Who can think of anyone who ever could

Bless the Lord Himself with immaculate good

#### STEP EIGHT

Hearkening bestows on the seeker all powers supernatural

Hearkening reveals the secrets of the earth, the sky, and the Mythical Bull

Hearkening unravels mysteries of isles, regions, nether lands

Hearkening death's invincible power disbands

Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression

Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin

#### STEP NINE

Hearkening gives the devotee the formidable powers of Trinity

Hearkening, to the meanest, imparts Divinity

Hearkening reveals the praxis, body's secrets, and the power of Yoga

Hearkening equals the knowledge of Shastras, Smritis, and the Vedas

Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression

Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin

#### STEP TEN

Hearkening unfolds the truth, knowledge, and bliss

Hearkening equals ritual bathing at sixtyeight holy places

Hearkening, all the honour of learning, begets

Hearkening, one always easily meditates

Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression

Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin

#### STEP ELEVEN

Hearkening, one can through rivers of virtues wade

Hearkening, one is a *pir* or an apostle made

Hearkening, the blind find their path hurdle-free

Hearkening, they fathom life's abyss easily

Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression

Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin

#### STEP TWELVE

Who can talk of the unique bliss of sound belief

All such trying shall always come to grief

Where is the paper, the scribe, and where's the pen?

The believer's state-of-mind beggars all description

Holy is the Name of the Formless One

Believed by few, to fewer known

#### STEP THIRTEEN

Awaken'd are the believer's mind, intellect, consciousness

To the entire Cosmic Mystery does he gain access

The believer in his life never cuts a sorry figure

Nor does death even bother a staunch believer

Holy is the Name of the Formless One

Believed by few, to fewer known

#### STEP FOURTEEN

The believer's path is from obstacles free

The believer shall be honoured exclusively

The believer is never in sects and cults stranded

The believer's faith is on Righteousness founded

Holy is the Name of the Formless One

Believed by few, to fewer known

#### STEP FIFTEEN

The doors of deliverance on the believer open

The believer's kith and kin, too, get salvation

Safe the believer lands, and, with him, an entire congregation

When, from the cycle of births, the believer attains salvation

Holy is the Name of the Formless One

Believed by few, to fewer known

#### STEP SIXTEEN

Elect are they, among humans esteemed, who God prefers

And, in His court, on them, high honour confers

The God-loved are welcome at His door, and embellish His court

The True One is their Guru on whom they have set their heart

Man can't, do what he will, Creator's endless state fathom

His Creation will forever remain beyond him

On whose horns toils this earth, in Dharma, they say

God's-Mercy-Begot, does infinite contentment display

The truthful alone may this secret know eventually

That the Mythical Bull can't such staggering loads carry

When there are earths beyond earth, many more beyond this world

By whose power are they supported and into space twirled

A myriad species are there, and their countless aspects

Lord's ever-moving pen has scribed complete in all respects

Who can write, who, for this staggering count, account

Because most certainly this would be a mind-boggling count

Who knows the limit of His powers divine

How superb are all His forms sublime

A single Word and Lo! Myriads of worlds came into being  
At His command rivers of life in millions started flowing  
I haven't got the power to fathom or surmise  
Nor am I suited to offer Thee a willing sacrifice  
What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action  
Changeless is Thy nature, Ye Immutable, Formless One

#### STEP SEVENTEEN

Countless recite His Name, and countless love Him  
Countless adore Him, as countless penance  
Countless from the Scriptures and the Vedas recite  
Countless practise yoga, and remain saddened hence  
Countless devotees on His Excellence-Omniscience meditate  
Countless are pious souls, and countless in giving charity elate  
Countless crusaders brave the arch-enemies' weaponry  
Countless think in silence ceaselessly of Thee  
I haven't got the power to fathom or surmise  
Nor am I suited to offer Thee a willing sacrifice  
What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action  
Changeless is Thy nature, Ye Immutable, Formless One

#### STEP EIGHTEEN

Countless fools see but mindlessly  
Countless thieves thrive on ill-gotten money  
Countless despots with their might oppress  
Countless cut-throats shed blood and suppress  
Countless are the sinners who depart in sinning  
Countless are the liars who're always lying  
Countless perverts subsists on ill-pretence  
Countless back-bite and burden their conscience  
Nanak, the lowliest of all the known lowly



After deep thought makes this humble homily  
I haven't got the power to fathom or surmise  
Nor am I suited to Thee for a willing sacrifice  
What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action  
Changeless is Thy nature, Ye Immutable, Formless One

#### STEP NINETEEN

Countless are Thy Names, Thy abodes countless  
Countless are Thy realms impossible of access  
Saying even countless is a burden like that of sin  
Yet without words one can't Name Him, much less adore Him  
Through words one gains wisdom, and sings of His mysterious ways  
Through the language of words one writes and his ideas conveys  
With words is destiny on everyone's forehead writ  
But who could on the Divine writer's forehead write it?  
As He ordains, so one's lot one would get  
Over the whole expanse of creation extends His Name  
Beyond His Name lies there not a single domain  
I haven't got the power to fathom or to surmise  
Not am I suited to Thee for a willing sacrifice  
What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action  
Changeless is Thy nature, Ye immutable, Formless One

#### STEP TWENTY

Dirt-smeared hands, feet, or the body  
Can be washed clean with water  
And if it be soiled laundry  
Clean would it with soap launder  
But when the mind is with the filth of sins smeared  
By the dye of God's-Name alone can it be cleared  
Mere saying makes nobody a saint or a sinner

Deeds are man-making seeds whose account is kept by the Maker

One must reap as one sows

By His Edict-Fiat, Nanak, one comes and goes

#### STEP TWENTY-ONE

Pilgrimage, penance, mercy, and charity

Give him a whit of fruit—but how proud is he!

Who, hearkening, believes—and nurtures God's love

Taken in the mind a holy dip to cleanse the inner core

All virtues are Thine, no worth have I got

Yet, sans imbibing virtues, devotion is naught

Self-Existent are Thou, and, among Thy creation

Are Brahma, matter, and the Holy Word

Truth, Beauty, and Eternal Love are Thine

Our salutations to Thee, O Immaculate Lord

What time was it, which era, what day, and date

Which season, which month, when the cosmos Thou did create

The Puranas would this corroborative evidence bear

If the pundits has at all this secret known

And the Qazi's knowledge in the Koran's exegesis find mention

But the yogi, nor anyone else, knows the date, the month, or the season

This exclusive secret is known, indeed, to none other than God

The Lord-Creator of all creation

How do I say it, how adore Him, how describe, how I know?

There's no dearth of those, Nanak each cleverer than the rest

Who claim to have this esoteric knowledge, though!

Great is the Lord God, supreme His justice

Whatever He ordains must come to pass

Nanak, the egotist can only of this knowledge brag—at best

But never shall he be welcome at His portals, alas!

## STEP TWENTY-TWO

Nether are the regions beyond numberless nether lands  
Countless are the skies beyond the heavens and The Sky  
Unfathomed is the depth of cosmos, unmeasured height  
The Vedas have in reckoning tired and so have I  
The Semitic texts speak of eighteen thousand spheres  
Yet point to one basic truth this paltry count must  
Everything springs from His Being—which, un-reckoned, one again swears  
Then, in a state of utter helplessness, returns to dust  
Therefore, suffice it to say, Nanak, that all human futility shows  
That He is great—yes, but how great?—God alone knows

## STEP TWENTY-THREE

Adoring Him, as they do, the devotees are yet ignorant of His glory  
Can the rivers fathom it as they trail back into the sea  
Holding mounds of wealth and dominions vaster than the sea  
Even the mightiest emperors can't match a tiny ant's worth  
In whose heart has God's immaculate love taken birth

## STEP TWENTY-FOUR

There is no limit to God's unique virtues  
Nor any to their human reckoning  
Beyond all measure is His vast creation  
And endless is His act of giving  
No limit to the spectacles that He stirs  
And infinite are the melodies that He conjures  
No limit to the secrets that His mind bears  
No limit to the creation of unreachable spheres  
Beyond could are those who've vexed to reckon  
But no success has ever been achieved by anyone  
The more certain we are, the greater He's become

Great is the Lord God, exalted His station  
Still higher than the most high is His Holy Name  
Who must ever venture to know his greatness  
Has to be as great as He, His stature to assess  
He alone knows His greatness, and He Himself can aver  
By His glance of grace, Nanak, He does His blessings shower

#### STEP TWENTY-FIVE

Who could assize Lord God's grace  
That matchless Benefactor sans all avarice  
Of Him the world's high and might beg at His door  
Beyond all reckoning remains their staggering number  
How many are ill-fated, sinners, bad men  
Wallowing in evil whose lives sadly lessen  
How many are such who receive but deny  
How many fools and gluttons eat on the sly  
How many are those who forever starve and languish  
But this, too, is a gift, Lord, of Thine own sweet wish  
Willed by Thee is human bondage, and release ordained  
Foolish is he who with Thee fault does find  
With one blow of fate back he comes to his mind  
God alone knows what to give and Himself gives he  
Yet a rare one acknowledges this truth gracefully  
The boon of His adoration such power brings  
As makes His chosen one, Nanak, the King of Kings

#### STEP TWENTY-SIX

Priceless are Thy qualities, Thy business is priceless  
Priceless are Thy godowns, and Thy men of business  
Priceless are the sellers and buyers in this enterprise  
Priceless are Thy rates, and priceless is the merchandise

Priceless is Thy court, and priceless righteousness  
Priceless is every measure, and the deal struck priceless  
Priceless is Thy benefaction, and priceless Thy seal  
Beyond reckoning are Thy Commandments, beyond limit Thy weal  
Without an infinite yardstick the priceless can't be assessed  
The meek who do venture are with Thy adoration blessed  
On the pages of Holy Books, and through countless inscriptions  
Thy glory is set out in discourses, and descriptions  
Brahma and Indra of Thy glory ever sing  
Sing, too, all the Gopis and their Govind  
Isvara praises Thee and so, too, miracle men  
And how many Buddhas adore Thee can't be known  
Hymns of Thy praise are sung by many a god and demon  
And by seers and sages, devotees, and holy men  
How many are born to sing of Thy glory  
How many have come and gone helplessly  
If as many more were to sing Thy praises evermore  
No points in Thy reckoning could they ever score  
As He wills so His stature grows  
Nanak, His secrets only the True One knows  
Who, claiming such knowledge, commits calumny  
Mark him not a boor, but a leader of many

#### STEP TWENTY-SEVEN

What's His abode like, whence does He His business carry  
From where does He oversee and sustain all His creation  
Countless melodies are struck of a staggering variety  
And countless minstrels always sing in heady elation  
Many are the musical measures which praise Thee  
With celestial bards singing to the tunes in harmony

Air, water, fire express Thy glory in charming music  
Dharamraja's tunes are also profoundly mystic  
Chitra Gupta keeps record of all actions human  
For Dharamraja to adjudicate thereon  
Sing of Thee Isar, Brahma, and Parvati  
All of them created and blessed by Thee  
Seated on his throne, Indra bows to Thee in singing  
Engrossed in the very midst of many a godling  
Miracle men sing of Thee entranced in *samadhi*  
The saints, in singing, fix their thoughts on Thee  
The celibate, the virtuous, and the contented—one and all  
Pay obeisance to Thee as do the valiant heroes too  
Scholars of the Vedas, and the great sages extol  
Thee, O Lord, age aft age—the ages through  
Exalted, too, are Thou by bewitching maids  
From heavens, earths, and the nether hades  
Praised are Ye by all the gems Thou did create  
And so by the places of pilgrimage, in all sixtyeight  
By all the four modes of life-generation  
Thy Name is kept in external glorification  
All terrestrial regions, and celestial spheres  
Thou all the cosmos forever reveres  
And in so doing are they themselves sustained  
They alone have the privilege of singing of Thy glory  
Who have first Thy choicest blessings attained  
And thus deeply steeped abide in the love of Thee  
Just how many more, Nanak, also sing of God  
Are beyond my imagination's wildest flight  
He alone is eternal, unchanging Lord

Whose Name remains True—beyond all spite  
Who has authored all this vast creation, He  
Is, has always been, and forever shall be  
Having created beings of many hues and kinds  
As enchanting *Maya* of supreme physical beauty  
God looks after His grand handiwork, as He minds  
The cosmic business, and sustains it by His gracious decree  
Whatever pleases Him, happens—and has His nod  
King of Kings is the sole Lord God  
And inviolable is His Edict-Fiat  
Nanak's own life is propped by it

#### STEP TWENTY-EIGHT

Wear you the ear-rings of deep contentment  
And make dignity of labour your begging-bowl  
Let meditation be the holy ash to smear your physique  
Make intimation of morality the virgin whole  
And faith in One God the mendicant's staff  
Remember, none of the countless sects is exclusive-unique  
Except that the cult of love is the only true religion  
And triumph over the world is actually a mind self-won  
Ceaseless salutation to Him is a devotee's holy gesture  
Who is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable  
And, in all ages, appear in unchanging vesture

#### STEP TWENTY-NINE

Knowledge is out diet, dispensed by compassion  
Divine sound makes music in every breast  
God, the Absolute Master, holds sway o'er all creation  
Worldly riches and miraculous powers have a misleading taste  
Union and separation together run the universal industry

The balance-sheet of good deeds and evil casts human destiny

Ceaseless salutation to Him is a devotee's holy gesture

Who is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable

And, in all ages, appears in unchanging vesture

#### STEP THIRTY

The Primal Mother in wedlock with Brahma bore

Three active regents: Creator, Provider, and Destroyer

As the Lord God wills so He guides them all

According to His sovereign edict-fiat

While He watches o'er them, He remains invisible

Mysterious! Isn't this marvellous act?

Ceaseless salutations to Him is a devotee's holy gesture

Who is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable

And, in all ages, appears in unchanging vesture

#### STEP THIRTY-ONE

The Lord's seat and His stores in all realms exist

Inexhaustible are they, though he filled them only once

He watches o'er all creation as He does persist

Nanak, just is God's dispensing munificence

Ceaseless salutations to Him is a devotee's holy gesture

Who is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable

And, in all ages, appears in unchanging vesture

#### STEP THIRTY-TWO

Were man's one tongue to multiply into one lakh, and thence

Become twenty times over as many at that

Were each tongue to move a hundred thousand times in utterance

Of God's Holy Name, forever aiming at

Unrelenting, uninterrupted, devotional remembrance

Treading this path, he would keep climbing His stairs



Till his 'self' dissolves into Lord's quintessence  
Tales of saint's glorious ascent won't catch unawares  
Even the worms—to follow suit with devotion, thence  
Truth is revealed, Nanak, by God's own grace  
Though the self-avowed brag of alternative ways

#### STEP THIRTY-THREE

Speech can't compel nor silence ever force  
Begging doesn't avail nor giving is going to matter  
One may chose to live or to death take recourse  
Neither rule can succeed nor treasure nor mind's chatter  
Nor power can ever dwell in the consciousness  
Awakened by knowledge and contemplation  
Neither does it abide in the scheming duress  
Of accomplished escape from all creation  
God alone has the might which from His own hands flow  
In His eyes, Nanak, none is high nor any who's low

#### STEP THIRTY-FOUR

Nights, seasons, occasions, and days, He made  
And air, water, fire, and the nether region  
Then, in the midst of them, He Himself laid  
Earth—as the mint of righteous action  
Where dwell creatures of many a shape and hue  
Their names are myriad, their numbers beyond mention  
All mortals are judged keeping their deeds in view  
True is the Creator, true His holy mansion  
There abide The Elect of God divinely charming  
There the Lord's gracious glance does His approval confirm  
There true from the false is sifted in final reckoning  
One's true worth will be known, Nanak, in the world to come

### STEP THIRTY-FIVE

The Realm of Righteous Action abides in the stated way

Next is the Realm of Knowledge which enchants by its working

There many forms of air, water, fire which hold sway

There countless Krishnas and Shivas have their dwelling

Numberless Brahmas are fashioning worlds, et al

Of many a form, colour, and bodily-ware

Many a karmic earth exists, many a mount celestial

Many a sermon is delivered to Dhruva out there

Many are the Indras, many the spheres of moons and suns

Many are the continents, and the lands galore

Many are the accomplished yogis, supreme ascetics, enlightened ones

Many are the incarnations of Mother Goddess evermore

Many are the species of gods, demons, celibates

Many are the oceans which gems produce

Many a mode is there which creatures creates

Many are the languages which they all use

There is many a lineage down which kings descend

Many are God's devotees engrossed in serving him

But none of them, Nanak, knows any end

### STEP THIRTY-SIX

The Realm of Knowledge is where illumination holds sway

And mystic melody reigns amid sublime visions and wonder

Enchanting beauty pervades the Realm of Endeavour

Where matchless forms are forged everyday

So unique is their beauty that it beggars all description

Whoever attempts it would be left speechless, ashamed of his antics

Fashioned in that realm are absorption, wisdom, and mind's illumination

Forged therein are the visions of innumerable gods and mystics

### STEP THIRTY-SEVEN

Might is the hallmark of the Realm of Grace  
Where no one lives except heroes of might supreme  
An endowment received through constant God-consciousness  
Many Sita-like heroines are there of surpassing esteem  
Those who are with God in constant communion  
Never suffer mortality nor anybody's guile  
Dwell in there devotees assembled from many a dominion  
Cherishing true bliss in their hearts all the while  
The Realm of Truth is where God himself reposes  
And casts His gracious glance, always watching o'er  
That realm houses all the continents and universes  
Whose limits nobody can by any means even explore  
Abide in that realm all forms of worlds of creation  
Untiring a-whirl in submission to His will  
God sees them, enjoys them, in divine elation  
To describe its limits, Nanak, is a task uphill

### STEP THIRTY-EIGHT

Let continence be the furnace, and patience the goldsmith  
Intellect the anvil and knowledge the hammer  
God's fear the bellows, austerity's-heat the fire  
Fill the vessel of devotion with the Holy Name's nectar  
In such a sacred mint forge them the divine Word  
Who by His glance are so favour'd  
Are in such hallowed task blissfully absorb'd  
Only heirs to His grace, Nanak, get this unique award

[Sloku]

Air is the spiritual guide, subtle his worth  
Water like father sires everything  
That's borne by the great mother earth  
The whole world plays without tiring  
Looked after by day and night: the two nurses  
The court of moral law is forever  
Taking note of all virtues and vices  
Accountable for his own actions is each creature  
More by token, some are granted nearness (to You)  
Others, who are kept at bay, embroil  
Meditation on the Holy Name blesses humans' toil  
Their faces glow, Nanak, others with them are liberated, too

#### ALTERNATIVE RENDERING

[Sloku]

Subtle as the air is the path-finder, and water does sire  
Everything, borne by Mother Earth, the intellect  
Day and night engage this world entire  
As male and female nurses, in life's playful act  
All virtues and vices are accounted at the Court  
Of Cosmic Moral Law, whereby all mortals  
By the force of their deeds, in the divine sport  
Move close to, or, away from, His portals  
Those, who meditate on the Holy Name, receive God's exclusive benefaction  
Deliverance illumines their faces, Nanak, as they secure others' salvation

## EPILOGUE

A Sikh is not a ruler. He is created to be a servant of all humanity without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, colour, or race. And yet he rules the world by winning over everyone's heart with love, humanity (i.e. essence of man), compassion, selfless service that may be consummated in sacrificing his life for the sake of *Dharma* and the freedom to practise it in his own special way.

The Sikh Faith underscores the validity and veracity of inner life in Guru Nanak's averment that victory over Mind is victory over the World. Because in such true triumph alone can the Self regain its spiritual sovereignty in its pristine glory. In that state of God-oriented inner life the five formidable foes—*kaam* (lust), *krodh* (anger), *lobh* (greed) *moh* (attachment), *ahankaar* (pride) finally acquiesce into spiritual imperturbability by sustaining Consciousness high above the torpor of dailiness. When one has found the *Source*, the ontological meanderings of the Mind, fired and fuelled by the stated enemies, are fulfilled in the placid timelessness of an inner life.

“Sikh” is a creative simplification of the Sanskrit word “Shishya”, which means disciple or student. The main requirements of being an earnest student are : humility (not self-pity about one's lack of knowledge), the desire to learn (from everyone, everything, everywhere, and all the time), receptivity (willing attention to whatever is said or seen or done), progression (as an index of slow and steady (*sahj*) illumination), mystical gumption (knowledge not as memorised quotes, but *instant* knowing transcending the conventional modes of sensation, perception, and cognition), and creative reconstruction (choices made by the use of one's sense of discrimination in the application of knowledge to effective/fruitful social service). It should thus be obvious that such a student (in full command of his senses) cannot be misled by anything, anyone—including his own outbursts of self-aggrandisement or self-gratification.

A Sikh's view and way of life is “choiceless (i.e., not motivated by selfishness) inner seeking in the pursuit of education which illuminates by reflection and fulfils by socially-beneficent action (*sewa*). For him, Truth is an immanent Reality—in eternal Progression through Evolution—that manifests itself in ever-improved forms of life. His religion is non-sectarian, non-communal, and non-denominational. It is the identification, acceptance, and enactment of *Dharma*, the All-Pervasive Cosmic Moral Law. Such a Truth cannot be indoctrinated, much less dogmatised or institutionalised. Hence, a Sikh's catholic open-mindedness and celebration of Life as *charhdi kala* (Spirits forever in the Ascendant) consummated in *Sarbat da Bhala*, the general weal of all humankind.

*JAPUJI: Exegesis & Poetic Rendering is an offbeat study of Guru Nanak's Bani because it has been done by a highly accomplished architect, who is a theorist, practitioner, researcher, and pedagogue—all rolled into one, with passionate interest in Inter-Faith Dialogue that partakes of Reason as much as it does of Emotion. It is based on the author's second PhD (2000) in which he had coined a new nomenclature; "Creative Mysticism", as a substitute for the word "Religion", which, he insists, evokes revulsion more than reverence in this Age of Reason owing to its centuries-long misuse and abuse.*

*The distinction of this inspired enterprise lies in that the exegesis that precedes the poetic translation not only seeks to deepen the understanding of the readers but also whet their appetite for reading in a new light the original reproduced in the Gurumukhi script and its Romanised transliteration. Since these versions and the English rendering appear on opposite pages the readers are encouraged to read them with an analytical discernment that may eventually help them interpret the sacred scripture in their unique ways and relate their meanings as sparkles of spiritual experience during workaday existence enriching their perceptions and ponderings manifold. This book should find the pride of place in all libraries and homes.*



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*He has made an enormous contribution to all fields in which he has been working. He holds three PhDs: one in Architecture, the second in Theology, and the third in Historical Monuments. The University of Queensland, Australia, conferred on him the Master of Architecture degree for original research on the Rock Garden of Chandigarh. His pioneering study has made this work of "Outsider Art" world-famous.*

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